

**THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN AN ĀZARBĀYJĀNĪ VILLAGE (IRAN)**  
**WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CARPET MANUFACTURE**

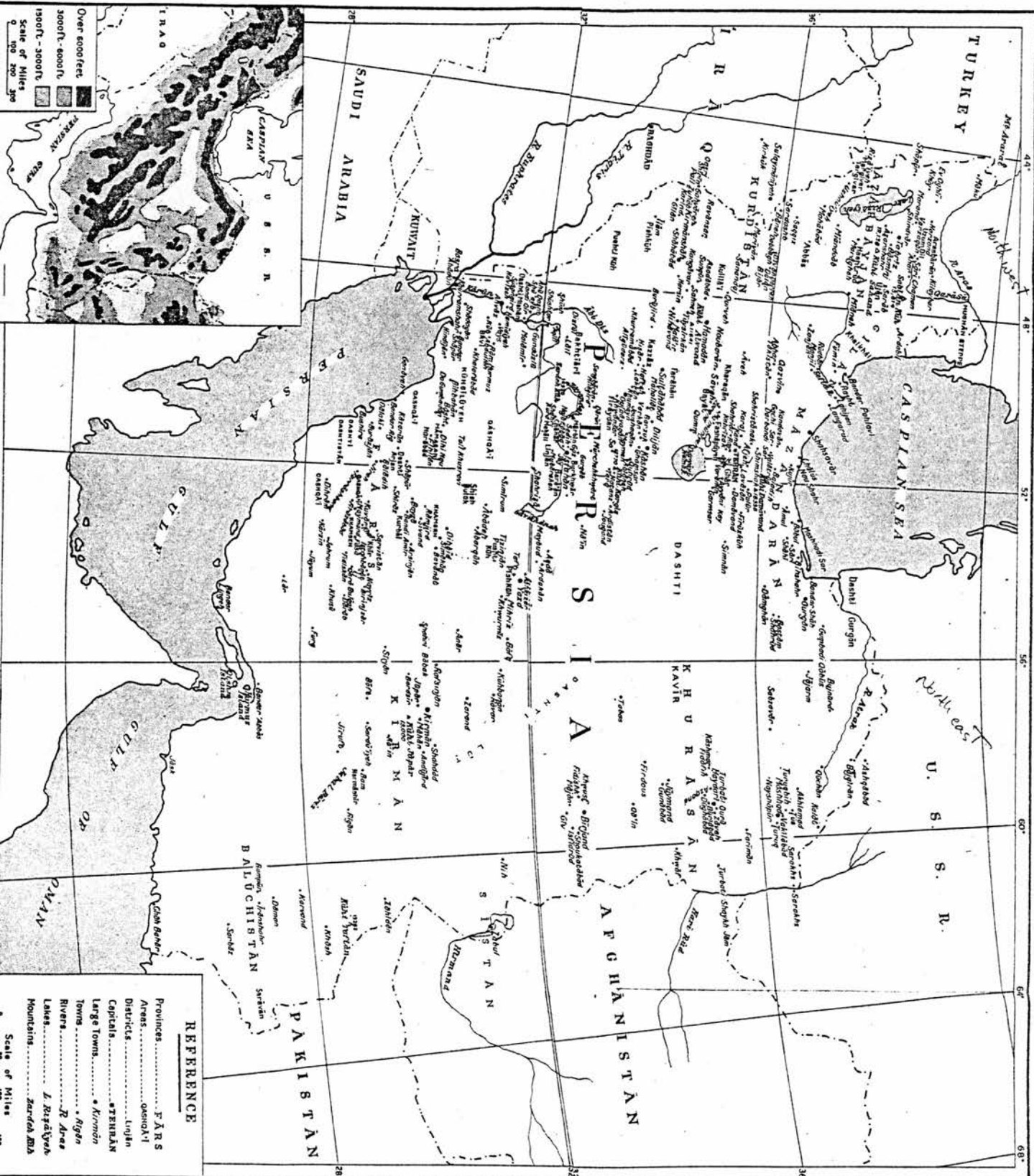
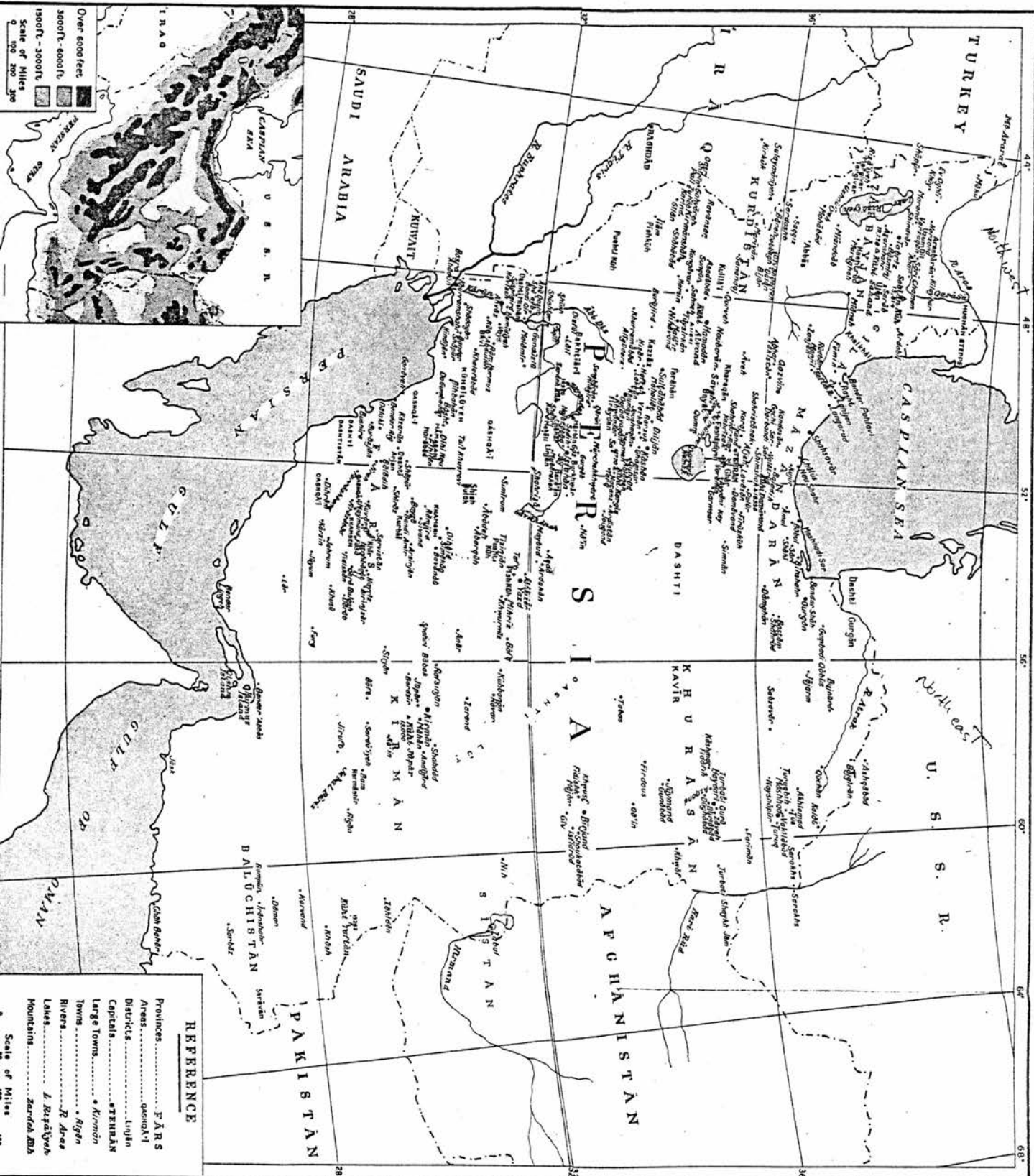
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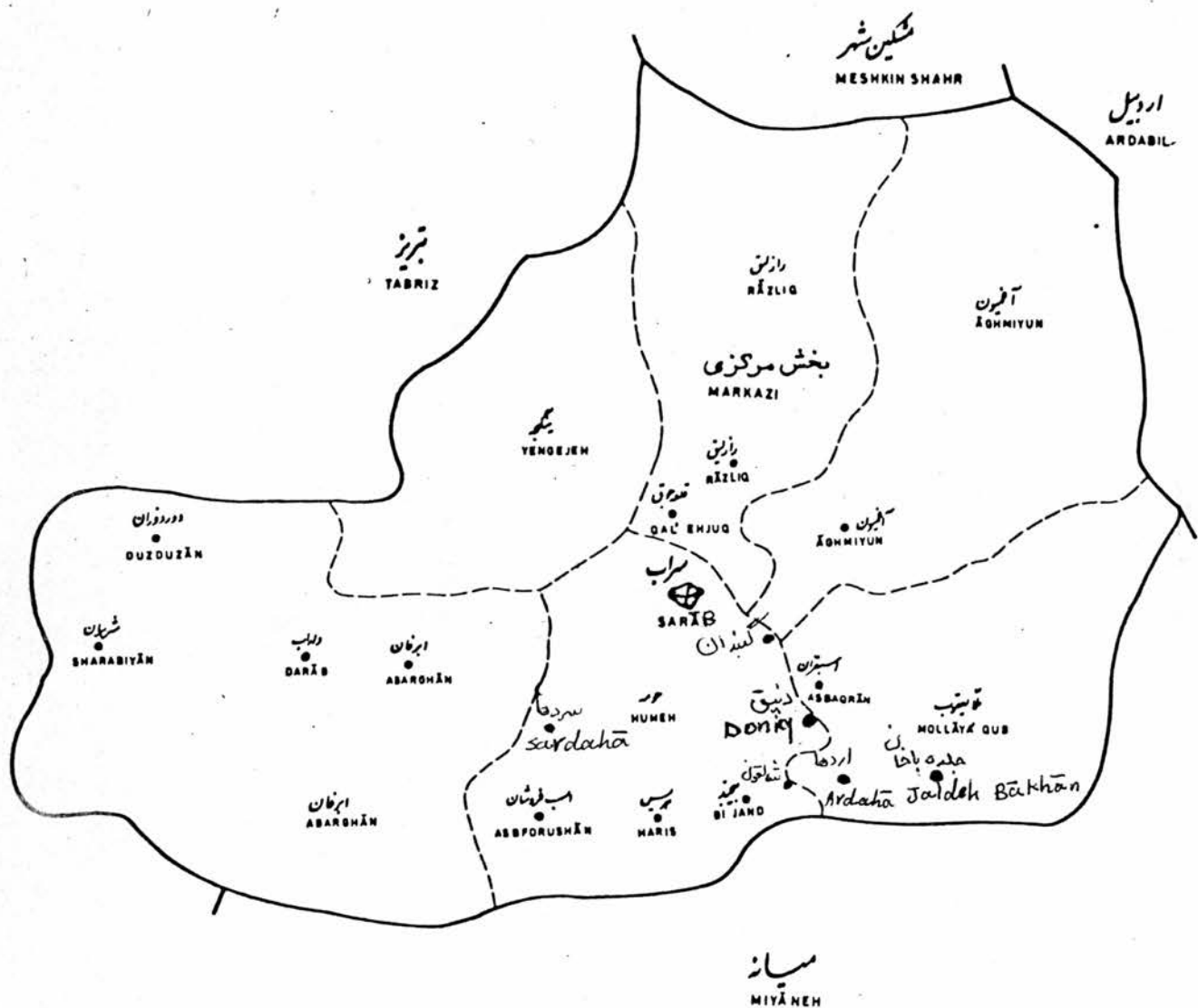






نقشه شهرستان سراب بخشک دهستانان - تعداد شهری و تعدادین ۵۰۰۰ تا ۲۰۰۰ (سرشماری آبان ماه ۱۳۳۵ شمسی)

SARAB SHAHRESTAN - BY DEHSTANAS, URBAN PLACES AND PLACES OF 2000 to 5000 INHABITANTS, November 1976



SYMBOLS علائم

DEHSTAN	بخش
DEHSTAN	دهستان
URBAN PLACE	شهری
PLACES OF 2000 to 5000 INHABITANTS	تعدادین ۵۰۰۰ تا ۲۰۰۰

APPROXIMATE SCALE مقیاس تقریبی

0 5 10 20



Large scale maps of this shahrestan showing dehestans, places and roads at the time of the National Census of Population and Housing, November 1976, may be purchased from the Statistical Centre of Iran

نقشه های مقیاس بزرگ این شهرستان، بخشک دهستانان، مکانها و راهها در زمان سرشماری جمعیت و مسکن، نوامبر ۱۳۳۵ (آبان ماه ۱۳۳۵) میلادی، می تواند از مرکز آمار و جمعیت ایران تهیه شود.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother.

## ABSTRACT

The thesis attempts to examine the general determinants of women's status in Doniq, a muslim village in North West Iran. The main theme of the study is the effect of development programmes and work on women's social position. As the result of recent developments in Iranian society, new income-generating work (carpet manufacture) has been introduced to Doniq. Carpet weaving is performed almost exclusively by women; and the income from it is of great importance to the society of Doniq. The present thesis, therefore, examines what impact carpet manufacture has made on women's status in Doniq.

The first chapter provides a brief ethnography of the village. Then it explores in some detail the developments which have recently occurred in the social and economic organizations of Doniq, along with the forces which have affected these developments, resulting in the expansion of the carpet industry in the village.

The second chapter places the small community of Doniq women in a wider context. A general set of theoretical concerns is examined to isolate those factors which are responsible for the perpetuation of the 'pardah system' and the seclusion of women in Doniq and similarly in many other muslim and non-muslim communities around the world. In this part of the study, special attention is paid to the question of whether or not Islam is the only factor controlling women's lives.

The following three chapters (third, fourth and fifth) concentrate on the features of women's traditional work prior to the introduction of carpet weaving to Doniq: marriage, housework and fertility. In chapter three, emphasis is placed on the lack of control and influence a woman has over her own demeanour,

sexuality, choice of marriage partner and marriage settlements. The restrictions which are imposed on women as brides and wives in extended and nuclear families are also discussed.

Chapter four focuses on the organization and evaluation of 'housework'. The connection of 'housework' to the outside world; the time and energy required to perform 'housework'; the value people attach to it; and its importance to the perpetuation of family and society are examined.

Chapter five explores the position of women in relation to their reproductive capabilities. The status a woman gains through the sex and number of her children and the control she exercises over her own fertility and children.

The final chapter, after dealing with the history and organization of the carpet industry in Iranian society as a whole and especially in Doniq, the financial contribution which carpet making makes to families is discussed in detail. The work ends with the examination of the effect of women's new roles as carpet weavers on the various aspects of their traditional work discussed in the previous chapters. The study demonstrates that women's involvement in carpet manufacture has brought about some modifications in their status, but that in general the impact has been minimal. The tradition norms of 'honour' and 'shame' and other ideological values of the people are still powerful forces in restricting women's influence over their own lives and in community affairs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am indebted to the University of Tabriz for permission to consult various statistics and unpublished work in their libraries.

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Finally, I am deeply grateful to the people of Doniq, especially my landlady and landlord who accepted me so warmly into their society as a guest and friend and sometimes as a member of their family.



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## PREFACE

Generally my thesis is based on the conditions determining women's status in a Muslim village. Many anthropologists dealing with Muslim communities treat the position of women, especially their seclusion, as primarily an Islamic phenomenon. While not denying that Islam does have a part to play in controlling the life style of women, I see difficulties in accepting that Islam is the only force governing women's status. Firstly, on the basis of ethnographic evidence from many non-Muslim societies around the world it is clear that the position of women in Muslim countries is not markedly different from that of women outside Islam. Secondly, there is no clear, unequivocal teaching of Islam on the position of women in society.

Recently, many social scientists have paid attention to the impact of development programmes on the place of women in society. They have examined the work women do and how their contribution is evaluated, and what effects their work can have on their capacity to influence decision-making and community affairs. It has often been assumed that the participation of women in productive activities and their contribution to the family income is crucial for the attainment of societal status and domestic power.<sup>1</sup>

1. P.R. Sanday, "Female Status in the Public Domain", in M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, Women, Culture and Society (Stanford, 1974), pp. 189-206; K. Sacks, "Engels Revisited: Women, the organisation of production and private property", in Rosaldo and Lamphere, loc. cit., pp. 207-222; E. Ackworth, The New Matriachy, (London, 1965), p. 150; M. Mies, "Consequences of Capitalist Penetration for Women's Subsistence Reproduction in Rural India", (paper read at the seminar 'Underdevelopment and Subsistence Reproduction in South West Asia', Bielefeld, 1978); I. Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850, (London, 1930); I. Tinker, et. al. (eds.), Women and World Development (New York, 1976); and R.H. Weller, "The Employment of Wives, Dominance and Fertility", in Journal of Marriage and Family 30 (1968), pp. 437-42.

Scientists and feminists often put forward 'productive' work as the key to women's position. It is vital to specify very clearly the type of work they really mean. One must ask whether any kind of activity, ranging from tasks performed outside or carried out inside the home, for wage or for subsistence may be defined as productive and effective in terms of women's social position.

For their definition of 'productive' work, most writers seem to have relied on official interpretations of national statistics which are often sex-biased. According to statisticians activities are considered productive if they are carried out outside home in the 'public' world and on the basis of wage relations. The tasks which are performed at home and largely for subsistence needs (such as processing and storage of basic food products, cooking of food, bearing and rearing of children, provision of water and fuel, tending animals, post-harvest work on the crops, processing of dairy products and making handicrafts which are often exchanged in the market for cash) are not regarded as work or as being productive. Therefore, the one (almost without exception a woman) who is occupied in these jobs, is defined as 'non-working' and 'non-productive', however labourious, time-consuming, income-generating and essential to the very existence of economy her work may actually be.

In regard to the claim that only those tasks carried on outside the confinement of home are 'productive', it should be borne in mind that this statement is not applicable to all work performed outside home. The definition applies to certain jobs and is sex-biased. For instance, in rural areas a man who is busy in the field in agricultural activities, is regarded as a full-time worker and productive, while his wife, who might assist him on the land or spend long hours outside the domestic sphere in fetching water, making fuel, and washing dirty clothes and dishes at the river is defined as non-productive.<sup>1</sup>

1. R. Dixon, Rural Women at Work, (John Hopkins University Press, 1978); (cont'd)



However, if we leave the definition of statisticians aside, comparative studies indicate that women generally, especially those in rural areas of developing countries, work much longer hours than their menfolk; the load of their work is more strenuous than that of the men and is more productive and vital to the perpetuation of the family and to the overall economy. Yet because their work is performed in an invisible context and is not paid, it is considered valueless, non-productive and therefore is believed to be of no effect on women's status.

My intention in this thesis is to place a study of the small village of Doniq in Āzarbāyjān (Iran) within this general context and to try to establish what the determinants of the position of women in Doniq may be. Doniq provides an interesting natural experiment because of the recent introduction of carpet manufacture in which women play a central part. Income from carpet weaving is crucial to the overall village economy; my task has been to try to determine what impact this industry has made on the lives of the women.

While presenting an general picture of the ethnographic background of Doniq, the first chapter of the thesis considers in detail the factors which have resulted in recent developments in the social, political and economic bases of Doniq and in the introduction of the carpet industry. In the second chapter, the small community of Doniq women is set against a background of wider theoretical concerns. A general analysis is given of the values and ideals which govern the 'institution of pardah' and the severe seclusion of women in Doniq (and similarly in various other societies around the world). Finally the discuss-

... N. Nelson, Why has development neglected rural women? Review of South Asian Literature, (Pergamon, 1979); K. Newland, The sisterhood of man: the impact of women's changing roles on social and economic life around the world, (Norton, 1979); B. Rogers, The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies, (Kogan Page, 1980), especially chapter three.



ion relates to the examination of forces which perpetuate the pardah system in many societies with different beliefs and backgrounds.

Chapters Three, Four and Five deal with the position of women in relation to their traditional work before the development of carpet manufacture in Doniq. In other words, Chapter Three looks at the position of women with respect to their marital life: the extent of power a women exercises over her own sexuality, behaviour and choice of marriage partner and over decisions about family relations. Chapter Four focuses on the organization of 'housework' and its value and importance to the economy and social system of Doniq. In the fifth chapter, the discussion is based on the fertility of Doniq women, considering the value given to their reproductive capacities and to the sex of the children they produce, and also the control they can take over their fertility and children.

The final chapter examines what effects women's involvement in recently-developed work (carpet weaving) have had on their position. After a brief discussion of the history and organization of the carpet industry in Iranian society as a whole, a detailed account is given of the organization of the industry in Doniq. Then attention is paid to the contribution which carpet weaving makes to the family income; and the roles women play in marketing their products and in controlling the income of their labour are examined. The chapter ends with an analysis of the effects of carpet manufacture on those aspects of women's traditional work which were considered in previous chapters.

### NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTION

No standard English system of transcription exists for Āzarbāy-jāni Turkish. As a literary language Āzarbāy-jāni uses either the Arabic or Cyrillic alphabets; the Romanized Standard Turkish alphabet is therefore not adequate. In making transcription from Āzarbāy-jāni Turkish my main objective has been to give an approximate representation of the local pronunciation (even though in the process some words of direct Persian and Arabic origin have been somewhat misrepresented). In this study I have adopted the following system:

#### Vowels

##### Turkish

a

ā

e

i

ī

o

ō

ū

u

##### English

man

bark

ten

in

father

as in French "eau"

as in French "deux"

as in French "tu"

book

#### Consonants

b, d, f, h, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, y and z are roughly as in English.

č

cheese often becomes ts

š

shop

g

hard as in garden; often palatalized to j = jet

Turkish

English

k

hard as in kid; often patalized  
to c = church

j

jar often becomes dz

c

glottal stop as between the words  
India Office

ء

glottal stop. Hamzeh

ğ

glottal fricative, as in Persian غلام

q

glottal plosive, as in Persian/  
Arabic "ق"

x

as in Scots loch

ay

lie

ey

they

aw

mouth

ow

own

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Settling in Doniq

For my study I chose northwest Iran (Āzarbāyjān) and decided to concentrate on a small village community in the region of Sarāb city. Three main factors had a bearing on my choice of this area. First I preferred the community I meant to study to be located in northwest Iran (Āzarbāyjān) and specifically in the region around Sarāb city because I was born and brought up there and was familiar with the culture - the customs, language and other indigenous peculiarities which I thought would be of utmost importance and help to me as I attempted to build up successful rapport with the people whose way of life I would be examining. I also considered that my being more or less on 'homeground' would give me advantages when I come to interpret the events of the community, the peoples' activities, points of view and ways of expressing themselves; I should not need as much assistance as most anthropologists rely on. Second, since I was especially interested in studying the position of women in relation to their jobs, and in particular to carpet manufacturing which has been a traditional handicraft in Iran performed mainly by women and little girls, it was necessary to choose an area where the carpet industry formed part of the economy. The third consideration in my choice of study area, was to concentrate on a small community in a rural area rather than choosing a section of a town or city, in order to be able, on the one hand, to learn something of an entire community, and on the other hand to satisfy my own curiosity and interest in village life and village people who, according to my impression carried on a different life

from my own, a harder and more primitive life. All in all, it seemed desirable to choose a village in East Āzarbāyjān near Sarāb city, a village with a small population of three or four hundred and with an economy at least partially based on carpet manufacturing. To find a suitable village from among one hundred and sixteen villages in the neighbourhood of Sarāb, I obtained from Tabriz University a census, taken in 1976, which covered Sarāb city and the surrounding rural communities, recording their population, distance from Sarāb, the types of handicrafts currently being produced, and various other details. There were four villages which met my requirements and appeared suitable for my purpose. On the recommendation of male relatives who had many years of teaching experience in the villages of the area, I decided to settle in 1979 in Doniq, a village twenty kilometers away from Sarāb.

To find a correct entree into the new community in order to be accepted by the people, I made efforts to be introduced to them formally, by those in authority. Therefore, I obtained a letter from the district governor to the village kad-xudā - 'chief' - and the members of the village councils, certifying that to complete my thesis I needed to stay in Doniq for a year and a half to collect the necessary data, and asking them to cooperate and provide the help I required.<sup>1</sup>

However, although I wanted the village authorities to be informed of my existence as a stranger in the village, in order to avoid possible disturbance by them and problems which might crop up if arrangements for my residence in the community were not made officially, I was also very anxious not to

1. Although there is no prescribed method of entering a new community, most writers on 'field-relationship' recommend entrance to a community via higher authorities. See D.P. Benjamin: "Interview Techniques and Field Relationship", in A. Kroeber (ed), Anthropology Today, (Chicago, 1953), pp.430-50; and J.P. Dean, R.L. Eichhorn and L.R. Dean: "Establishing Field Relations", in C.J. McCall and J.L. Simmons (eds), Issues in Participation Observation, (London, 1969), pp. 68-70.



become too closely associated in the villagers' minds with the local authorities. I do not believe that this association was made by the people; if it did, I overcame it.

On the first day when I set out for the village, I met the two female teachers of Doniq in the village bus. Luckily both of them belonged to Sarāb and I was acquainted with them to some extent. I described my work to them, asking if they could help me to settle in the village. They welcomed the task of helping me to get to know the village chief and Council members. Meanwhile, the women asked me to stay with them in their small rented room in the village school until I could manage to rent a room, which would prove very difficult, since the villagers did not have spare rooms to rent. During the first two or three days of my stay in Doniq, I discovered that the teachers enjoyed a special reputation among the villagers and had the respect of the people, because as the villagers themselves put it,

"The teachers go to the trouble of commuting daily from Sarāb to teach our children. Besides, they are very kind to our people and to the children and behave very modestly."

This modesty was a very vital concern for the villagers when they accepted a strange woman into their community and allowed her to associate with their womenfolk. It was therefore in my interest to stay with these teachers until I knew something of the village and villagers. The only professional woman's role with which the people of Doniq were acquainted, was the role of teacher. Initially, they thought that I was also a new teacher and addressed me as "teacher", but from the beginning I tried to tell them the truth rather than introducing myself in an ambiguous way which would make people suspicious about my real position. I explained very explicitly that I had come to study and analyze their women's lives and problems, I told them that I was particularly interested in their work, how they



organized their housework and carpet weaving and brought up children. This explanation of my work was understood reasonably clearly by a few relatively well educated male inhabitants of Doniq, and satisfied them, but for many others, both men and women it was not so clear or acceptable. They said that there had never been such a person in Doniq coming from outside to study their lives and problems. The people often guessed that perhaps it was the policy of the new government (which had come into power in 1979) to send educated people to villages in order to study their lives at close quarters and report the problems to those responsible for getting them solved. Since my fieldwork began shortly after the revolution, people were more suspicious and sensitive towards strangers than before. They were afraid lest the new and strange visitor be a *sāvāk* agent who had come to take shelter or provoke people against the government or that the incomer could be a communist (anti-communist propaganda had been distributed soon after the revolution, enjoining people repeatedly not to give communism the slightest chance). All in all the people of Doniq were suspicious towards me asking various questions:

"What sort of book are you going to write?",  
"Have you really been sent by the state to stay in the village or you have come of your own accord?",  
"Why do you want to stay in the village during the night as well as the day rather than commuting like the teachers?",  
"Do you want to report the information collected to the state or take your findings abroad?",  
"What sort of benefit will your work have on our lives?"

To respond to all these very sensitive questions, I emphasized one of many suggestions made by Anselm Straus to those who might be asked to define their research role, namely that I had come with the permission of the authorities to "analyze a locally felt problem so that it may be alleviated by proper authorities."<sup>1</sup>

1. A. Straus: "The process of fieldwork", in McCall and Simmons (eds) op. cit., pp. 24-30.

Later I learned that the villagers had gone to the district governor and their own relatives who lived in Sarāb to make enquiries about me, my work and my relatives.

In any case, three or four weeks after my taking up residence in Doniq, when people's suspicion towards me had not yet been completely resolved, I heard that the teacher of the fifth grade class for boys had left in the middle of the term because his period of service in Doniq had come to an end and that the authorities had responded to enquiries, stating that they would be unable to send a new teacher until the start of next term. I decided to take over their teaching free of charge for two months both as a means of getting to know their families and of improving my rapport with the community. This decision was one that made good sense and which was rewarding to me. Whenever the students' parents saw me in the village bus or in the streets they told me that they understood that I was doing a job that wasn't mine and that I had taken over the responsibility simply for the benefit of the villagers and their children. To compensate for my trouble and kindness they sent me repeatedly butter, cheese and milk (customary presents in the village) and invited me to take meals with them. The invitations were very good opportunities to establish friendly relationships with them. Reporting their childrens' study progress provided a starting point for collecting data on education and on parents' viewpoints about their daughters' and sons' education.

In addition to the role of teacher, I expanded my activities to include other fields. For instance, I tried to treat minor ailments and wounds, though I was completely inexperienced in this field. I had two reasons for taking on this extra work. I saw it as a way of getting closer to the villagers and I was also struck by the lack of even the most basic first-aid facilities in the village. One day while I was with teachers in the girls' school, one of the students hurt her finger seriously. I

asked the teachers for some cotton and other items needed for the treatment of the cut, but they had no suitable supplies. Some of the pupils were sent to look for some cotton in houses around Doniq, but were unable to obtain any. Eventually, we bound the wound up by the traditional methods used by the villagers - putting some turmeric on it and binding it up with a piece of old and dirty cloth. As a precaution I later provided the village with some first-aid supplies ranging from cotton, band-aid and mercuro-chrome to aspirin and other painkillers, asking people to refer to me whenever they were involved in the sort of minor medical problem which these items could alleviate. My husband took over the responsibility of dealing with the ailments and injuries of the men and I accepted the same job in relation to women and children. Meanwhile I frequently visited sick people, taking them medicines and sometimes spending the whole night with them. Quite often I took sick people and women in labour to the doctor in Sarāb, spending many hours with them in hospitals, clinics and drug stores. Sometimes this kind of involvement with the people became too complicated for my liking. During the early months of my fieldwork when I had started to help the villagers with health problems merely to establish myself in the village and strengthen my relationship with the people in order to be able to collect the data I needed, an event happened which was very annoying and inconvenient. One day, people reported to me that a woman had been in labour for three days and could not give birth; and they asked me if I could help her. I went to visit her, seeing that she was in a dangerous condition I advised her husband to take her to hospital in Sarāb. Her husband complained about the carelessness of the hospital personnel and of their discrimination against the village people, and turned over the job to me. As usual I agreed to help. On our way to Sarāb, when we were still approximately five kilometers away from the hospital, the woman said she was delivering the baby. I was embarrassed, since I had no experience in assisting with childbirth. The only thing I could do was to plead

with the lady to hold the baby back (which was very dangerous) until we got to the doctor; and I also asked the driver to increase his speed as much as he could. Two things upset me considerably at that time. In the first place I did not know what to do in the situation and in the second place (but a very important consideration) was the fact that if the woman had given birth in the bus, she and her husband would have been considered by all the village people to have been shamed and dishonoured and would have been a laughing-stock, this in turn might have endangered my established rapport with the people. During the whole journey the woman was telling me that she was about to have the baby and I was telling her - pleading with her - to wait until we reached the hospital, although I undressed her and took her to lie down at the back of the vehicle to make her as ready as possible for the delivery. Very fortunately, the delivery did not take place until we reached the hospital where I had an argument with the doctor and the so-called hospital officials who intended to admit the woman only after investigating her economic and social status and finding out whether she would be able to pay her hospital expenses. The event was a bad experience as well as a teaching experience for me. After that I tried to cut back my activities in this field. However, on the whole, this kind of emergency work helped me considerably to build up a very friendly and strong relationship with the people and to remove all their suspicions and hesitations.

Later on, my husband took measures which were also important to my fieldwork, adding to our good relations with the local people. The village had two springs - one located in the Tāt clan's quarter and another in the Bay tribe's. The water from each of these springs had been diverted elsewhere and so there was insufficient water supply for the people. There was always a long queue around the springs and usually there were quarrels over the water. After consultation with the village men and on the basis of their own cooperation and my spouse's limited



knowledge of construction, the springs were developed using very modern methods with two large concrete storage tanks and four taps which held the water back during the night and supplied enough water for use during the day. After the construction of this reservoir the men of the village worked along with my husband to build a village mortuary. Before this they used to wash the corpses ceremonially in their houses. Again, by giving this kind of help to the community, we brought the people closer to us and they became friendlier. They said that we were angels sent by God to help them. They always prayed to God to grant us many sons (as they themselves were fond of sons). From wondering who I was and why I had come to stay in the village they shifted to wondering why I could not stay forever.

Seven months later, while I was taking advantage of this friendly relationship to collect data, another problem came up. The village mullā (religious leader) who had also become the chief of a revolutionary committee in Sarāb and whose power had become enormously inflated, came to the village to collect revenues, as was usual during a religious month. When he was told that we were living in the village, he tried, in his sermon in the mosque, to make the people believe that since we had been studying abroad the information we had been collecting in the village (all the secrets of the people lives, the mullā suggested) would be taken away to be used by foreign countries, While the villagers would gain nothing. To prejudice people still more against us, he suggested that we might be communists and that the village people should not allow us to live in Doniq any longer. The mullā threatened the villagers ordering them to force us to leave the village or he himself would leave, so that the people would be without a religious leader - a difficult situation. Although I had the permission of the district governor to carry out my research, and the mullā did not have authority to make me leave the village, the opinion of the people was of tremendous importance. They had

to choose either to believe what the mullā said, or to trust me and ignore his attempt to turn them against me. Luckily the villagers chose the second option, pointing out to the mullā that he had been coming to the village for sixteen years and had received sixteen thousand Tomān (£1000 a year), yet had not done a hundredth part of what we had done for them in only seven months. The mullā was told that they would not consider banishing from the village people who had served the community so faithfully. In any case, the mullā left the village and never came back. I was pleased that I was able to stay peacefully in the village until the end of my fieldwork. The village people trusted me, received me readily into their community and acted with courtesy and hospitality towards me. I should like to express my thanks, friendship and admiration for the people of Doniq. Because I was able to establish close friendships with people, many confidences were given me and I acquired information which would have been otherwise unavailable to me. Because of this friendly atmosphere, I believe all the facts I was given were told to me by the people as exactly and fully as they were able to report them, and I examined these facts and made my interpretations to the best of my ability.

Of course I had to make many adjustments to my own life-style while I stayed in Doniq. Like all the villagers I lived in a small mud-brick room. This was located at one end of the village. Every morning, it was filled with heavy smoke which came from my landlord's room where the oven was fuelled every morning with animal dung to bake bread. I used to open my window (even in the winter time) and leave my room for one or two hours to sit in the courtyard until the smoke cleared. Though my room was located at one end of the village in the Bay clan's quarter, I tried to visit members of the other tribes at the opposite end of the village at least once every two days. I was accompanied by a little boy who carried a stick, stones and bread to protect me against the shepherd dogs which were



always on duty in front of the houses. If I neglected such visits, the people of the other clans would take offense because of what they considered the undue time I spent in the Bay clan's quarter. I tried very hard not to show any kind of discrimination against any of the three clans of the village who were at odds with one another, and I followed the recommendation of John Beattie to fieldworkers who are dealing with a hierarchical society. He writes,

"In a society where there are distinct social groups or classes and especially where these are hierarchically arranged in terms of power and prestige, too close identification with one group or class may make easy contact with others difficult and impossible."<sup>1</sup>

Too close a relationship with one group might even endanger a fieldworker's rapport in the whole community. There would always be the possibility of threat against the researcher by a group with whom he or she had not been on such close terms as with others.

Even if I did not dress in exactly the same style as the women of Doniq, I made an effort to adjust my dress to theirs. I dressed very simply and covered myself with a veil in the same modest and strict arrangement that the village women used. Even in my room, in the presence of older women I never tried to put my čādīrā - 'veil' - aside as this would have been considered disrespectful to them. I observed usual and tiresome forms of respect shown towards older people just as the villagers did. I rose to my feet and remained standing until she or he permitted me to sit. Sometimes my standing up and sitting down amounted to more than a hundred times a day, depending on the number of my visits, the number of people I met and the range of their activities: for according to the

1. J. Beattie: Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology, (London, 1964) p.87.

etiquette of this society, one must adjust one's personal movements in accordance with the immediate movements of an older person. For instance, if an older individual leaves a room to fetch something, one has to get up and sit down. While entertaining a visitor, an older woman may leave the room frequently to fetch necessary things and a younger visitor must stand up and sit down every time the hostess goes out and comes back into the room.

### Methodology

The standard anthropological techniques of participant observation - direct observation, direct participation, informant interviewing, respondent interviewing, structured, unstructured and open-ended interview were used to obtain data and to arrive at an understanding of the life, behaviour and social organization of Doniq women.<sup>1</sup> Frequently, I wanted my subjects to talk about what they wanted to talk about and to describe the situation as they saw it. I tried to piece together the life stories of many informants and this gave me adequate information about the behaviour patterns of the people, their relationships with one another and social norms within the community. On the other hand I often chose to keep quiet and let people ask me questions.

"Are girls' marriages arranged by their fathers and brothers in the city?",  
"At what age do they marry?",  
"Do they stay with their parents-in-law?",  
"Do women abroad veil themselves?"....

... and questions of this sort were asked which gave me an

1. For the techniques of fieldwork see, McCall and Simmons (eds) op. cit. I found this book useful, especially the articles by M. Zelditch, "Some methodological problems of field studies", pp.5-19; P.J. Dean, R.L. Eichorn, and L.R. Dean, "Limitation and Advantages of Unstructured Method", pp.19-24; R.W. Janes, "A Note on Phases of the Community Role of Participant-Observer", pp. 52-60; G. Raymond, "Roles in sociological field observation", pp. 30-39; Anselm Strauss, "Field Tactics", pp. 70-77; V. Arthur, "Participant observation and the collection and interpretation of data", pp.78-87; and M. Schwartz and G. Schwartz, "Problems in participant observation", pp.89-105; see also P. Gold, Women in the Field, (Stanford University Press, 1970).

idea of the villagers' opinions as well as acting as starting-point for other discussions. To obtain detailed information and as much general ethnographic data as possible I took a house-to-house census on the economic position of the villagers - the number of their animals, their expenses and interests, the size of their land holdings, the number of looms owned by each household for carpet weaving, the number of women who worked on each loom, number of years they had been working as weavers. I also asked questions about the village marriage form - whether they favoured marriages within or outside the community, to relatives or to non-relatives. I asked how old girls were at the time they were married and how much money or property went into a typical marriage transaction (dower and dowry). I took a census on the total number of children (alive and dead) born into each household and the number of pregnancies of each woman. I asked the women about their emotions (particularly their worries) during their first pregnancies, and I questioned them about the use of contraceptives. The final questions of my census dealt with the educational position of the people. By taking a census on these topics, I was supplied, not only with quantitative information, but with qualitative material on various social institutions. For instance, women accompanied factual answers about the amount of their dowers with their thoughts and feelings about the system of provision for a dower, while enquiring about the number of children in a family would produce many interesting comments, showing the feelings of the women themselves and of their husbands about pregnancy, contraception and their attitudes towards girl and boy children.

In addition, I made every effort to take part directly in the customary cycle of goings-on which made up daily life in Doniq. A small group of "principal informants" were used, including my landlady and landlord and other new neighbours who became my best and most trusting friends. But, in general, women were my main sources of information. The practice

of seclusion for women and the code of modesty which are characteristic of every Muslim community, including Doniq, did not allow me to put my questions to men. Whenever I visited a house, its male members left the house immediately, excusing themselves by saying that they had things to do outside the home. "I'll go out and leave you women to enjoy yourselves" was very often what they said. Because of my own upbringing in the same culture and because I had a fair understanding of the segregated lives of women and men, I did not insist on obtaining information from men. It was quite clear that if I tried to question men people would be very likely to suspect that I wanted to talk to the men in order to make sexual advances (as I was once suspected of doing). Although the men seemed to be more likely sources of some sorts of information than the women, because they controlled and dominated the social, economic and political spheres of the village, there were altogether very few opportunities of obtaining information from them. The only male informants from whom I was able to collect data, especially from a historical point of view, were my landlord and two other very old men who were my close neighbours. As a woman I had easy access to the women's world and so I studied Doniq's social organization mostly through them. I did not use a tape-recorder in the interviews nor did I take notes in case doing so should strain the atmosphere and adversely affect the participant-observation. The tape-recorder was only used to record some songs during the weddings and religious ceremonies. During the interviews, I took mental notes, writing them down immediately after the interview. I deliberately avoided very long interviews in order to allow accuracy of recall. Initially, I tried to take key-notes, but I stopped doing that when I discovered that note taking inhibited conversation. I believe the data presented here about the status of women in Doniq can be used, to a large extent, to generalize about the lives of the women in the surrounding rural areas and in nearby towns.



In the remainder of this chapter, I attempt to analyse the recent modifications and developments which have occurred in Doniq. In the past twenty years dramatic changes have taken place in the economic, social and political organization of Doniq, and women have important parts to play in bringing about these changes. These modifications, in turn, have not been without effect on the position of women and on their life-style. Therefore this chapter, while concerned mainly with the ethnographic background of the village also emphasizes the economic, social and political features of Doniq twenty years ago; the changes which have occurred in recent years and the factors leading to them.

### Wider Setting

Iran is divided into thirteen ostān or provinces. In the north-west of the country is Āzarbāyjān which is divided into two parts; East and West Āzarbāyjān. Sarāb is one of the districts of East Āzarbāyjān which is located in a region that is a mixture of flat and hilly country to the east of Tabriz district. It lies between two ranges of mountains. Sarāb is bounded on the north by the Sabalān mountain range whose chief summit is Sabalān (4200 meters); on the south lie the Bozquš mountains of which the most famous summit is Quš (3170 meters high); on the east is Ardabil district and on the west lies Tabriz district. The climate of Sarāb varies according to the altitude of particular areas - regions which are on the plain having a temperate climate while the mountainous areas are cold. The drinking water and the water for land irrigation is supplied by public reservoirs, wells, qanāts and springs and rivers of both the southern and northern slopes of Sabalān and Bozquš. The most important rivers of Sarāb are the Pašu, Süyün, and Vāneq. The district is composed of rural and urban areas. The rural areas which form the major part of the whole district - 2,866 square kilometers, consist of one Baxš by the

name of Baxš-e Markazi which is subdivided into six Dehestān: Abarḡān, Āḡmiyān, Humeh, Rāzliq, Mollā Ya'qub and Yengejeh. The total number of villages which form the Dehestān and the whole rural area of the district number one hundred and sixteen, supporting a population of 104,171 out of 122,532 - the total population of the district.<sup>1</sup> The urban areas consist of Sarāb which is the only sizeable town in Sarāb district and which is the centre of the whole region. The population of Sarāb city numbered about 18,361 in the census of 1976.<sup>2</sup> The people speak the Āzarbāyjāni dialect of Turkish and are Shi'a Muslims. The history of Sarāb goes back a very long way. Lestrangé quotes references to it by Ibn Hawkal (978 A.D.), Yakut (1225 A.D.) and Mustawfi who was writing in 1340 A.D. Yakut claimed that it had been overrun by the Mongols in 1225 A.D. and its inhabitants massacred; but it had evidently recovered by the time Mustawfi was writing a hundred years later. During the middle ages it is known to have been a large and prosperous town.<sup>3</sup>

Mustawfi and other early geographers have recorded the name of the city as Sarāt, Sarāv, Sarāh and Sarāb.<sup>4</sup> The city of Sarāb is situated on a plain and on the main Tabriz-Ardabil road - 56 miles from Ardabil and 70 miles from Tabriz. One of the most important historical buildings of the city is the Jūma mosque whose foundation is said to go back to the period of the second Caliph (Omar 634-644 A.D.). Sarāb is the district's headquarters and, as such, contains a civil hospital, offices

1. National Census of Population and Housing. Sarāb Shahrestān, East Āzarbāyjān ostān (Statistical Centre of Iran, 1976) p.n.

2. The population of Sarāb was 14,820 in 1950 according to Farhang-e Joḡ rāfiyā-ye Iran, Vol. 4 (Teheran, 1330 sh), p.263.

3. G. Lestrangé, The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate, (Cambridge, 1930), p.163.

4. H. Mustawfi, Nuzhat-Al Qulub, edited by G. Lestrangé in two volumes - Vol. 1, Persian text, (Leyden, 1913), p.86, and Vol. 2, English translation (London 1919), pp. 87-88.

of the Departments of Agriculture and Education, Cooperative Banks and an extensive bazaar. It is the market and business centre of all the neighbouring villages. The people of the district earn their livelihood mainly through agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and public service. Of the 18,514 inhabitants employed in 1976, 35.2 per cent were in agriculture, 42.1 per cent were in mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and in the electricity, gas and water supply services and 22.1 per cent were in the civil service. In the urban area these figures were 6.7, 30.8 and 62.3 per cent, respectively. The corresponding figures in the rural areas were 42.9, 45.0 and 11.8 per cent, respectively.<sup>1</sup> The main exports of the district are rugs, carpets, dairy products, especially cheese and butter, corn and cereals; and the imports consist of cloth, tea, sugar and other textile stuffs.

### Village Setting

In recent years some dirt roads have been constructed around Sarāb city to connect its surrounding villages together and to link these villages to Sarāb itself. One road now extends East of Sarāb. Travelling east along this narrow dirt road, one passes several villages in a wide plain covered with vegetation and patches of wheat during spring and summer, and with snow and mud in the autumn and winter time. About fifteen kilometers from Sarāb, a trail goes to the left, running through a small village by the name of Tiršāb set on a hill. Following this trail for five kilometers one reaches Doniq, the village on which I concentrated for study.

Doniq is one of the villages of the Humeh Dehestān. It is located in a mountainous area in the East of Sarāb. A narrow gate surrounded by high walled garden forms an entry-way to the village. Its mud-brick houses which are set in their own

compounds or *hayats*, behind two foot high walls, are

1. National Census, 1976, p. (P). irregular village lanes or by



compounds or hayats, behind ten foot high walls, form the walls of narrow and irregular village lanes or küča. The central feature of the village is the mosque, with the school and shops to be found all around. The houses are clustered nearby and fields of wheat, depending upon the season, or other cultivated fields and pasture land, extend on each side of them. Although the village appears isolated, other small villages also lie in the same valley. Doniq is surrounded by the neighbouring villages of Gonbadān, Owğān, Andarāb, Tiršāb, Haravān, Jaldebāxān, Ardahā, Šālqun, Bejand and Heris lying anything from 2 to 5 miles away. All these villages are connected by dirt roads, but people usually use the edges of the fields as short cuts. The relationship of all these villages is very close and sometimes there are very specific ties between them. Doniq, for instance, has a very close relationship with Ardahā: the Doniq farmer has Haqq-e Ābeh - the right to share in the water of a river. The people of the two villages borrow and buy grain, fodder, cattle and sometimes money from each other. There are two mineral springs to be found on the slopes of Bozquš mountain in Ardahā and people from the city and neighbouring villages, including the Doniq villagers, go to bathe there, especially in summertime, believing that the water acts as a health cure, relieving all sorts of aches and pains. There is a small clinic in Ardaha to which a doctor commutes twice a week and people in Doniq prefer to go there because of its closeness rather than going to the city doctor, though they believe that the doctor of Ardahā is not of much help to them, because there is no charge and, more important, the doctor's patients are mostly the village people against whom he always discriminates because he believes that the villagers are idiots and cannot understand anything. Ardahā also has a Gendarmerie station to which Doniq people and other neighbouring village people refer in the case of a serious disagreement over land, pastures, water and other affairs. These types of advantages possessed by Ardahā which is the largest village in the area, have given many neighbouring villages including Doniq very

close links with it. The relationships of villages in this cluster are reinforced by a cooperative market held weekly in one of the villages. To this market the villagers bring the surplus of their agricultural and dairy products, animals, and crafts and exchange these with each other.

Neighbouring villages share in each other's good and bad events. When someone dies in one of the villages or a villager loses a buffalo or some similar loss of goods or other calamity occurs or when someone makes the pilgrimage to Mashad or Mecca, completes his military service, the people of the other villages come flocking to offer their sympathy or to make göruş - visit with presents. Besides all this, the connections between villages are strengthened by marriage links. Daughters come home for visits regularly and on special occasions people who are related through marriage visit one another. Sometimes quarrels break out between neighbouring villages and these have to be settled by the village aq-saqqa - 'grey beards' - or the intervention of the state. Causes of such quarrels may include repeated straying of cattle into the fields of another village or diversion of water to unauthorised fields or perhaps an illicit sexual relationship or an elopement. Any of these may result in outbreaks of anger and fighting. The fighting sometimes becomes so widespread that everyone in the villages concerned becomes involved and it all ends in many casualties.

According to the census I took of the village population in 1979-80, Doniq has a population of 699 and 103 families.<sup>1</sup> A comparison of censuses demonstrate that during the last 20 years approximately 233 individuals and 18 families have been added to the population of Doniq. Census questions concerning native or 'incomer' status indicate that apart from 6 men who have migrated to the village from neighbouring villages as the res-

1. The population of Doniq stood at 466 (85 families) according to the 1966 statistics (National Census of Population and Housing). By the indication of the 1976 census the population of Doniq had risen to about 576 (96 families).

ult of poverty and disasters, almost all the village men have been born and brought up in Doniq. In contrast to men, who normally remain members of the same political and social community from birth to death, it is quite common for women to leave their natal village on marriage. 36 women have moved to Doniq from neighbouring villages because they married Doniq men.

However, this increase of Doniq's population in recent years does not seem striking when compared to the considerable rise in the population throughout Iran.<sup>1</sup> The increase of population in Doniq as in other parts of Iran, has been affected by recent developments. The relative economic development, rise of families' incomes, improvement of communication, easy access to city doctors have relatively improved people's nutrition and their state of health. Even the slightest improvements in health and nutrition have helped to overcome high infant mortality. The reduction in the number of infant deaths can be seen from the following figures taken from my census. During the 1960s, on average, 14.7 children died out of 33.3 born annually; whereas, the number of babies born annually during the 1970s averaged 30.2, of whom approximately 9.9 died each year. The result of an increase in the population of Doniq, as in other villages of Iran, has been a growth in the number of qariba or

1. A 25-40 birth rate per thousand saw a death rate of 19-20 per thousand in the early years of the century. The death rate had been reduced to 21.3 per thousand in a birth rate which had risen to 50.3 per thousand by 1968 as one effect of nation-wide spraying against malaria and other endemic diseases in the 1950s; the population growth rate has risen from an annual 0.75 per cent in the mid-1920s to an estimated 3.2 in the early 1970s. This means that the overall population of Iran has grown from 9.9 million in 1900 to 20.4 million at the time of the first census in 1956, 27.1 million by the second census (1966) and 33.6 million when the 1976 census was taken.

Statistics prior to 1976 are drawn from J. Bharier, Economic Development in Iran, 1900-1970, (London, 1971), Chapter 2, 'Human Resources', pp. 24-5; and figures for 1976 are from Iran Almanac and Book of Facts, 1977, Sixteenth Edition, (published by the Echo of Iran), pp. 369-70.

Xošnešin<sup>1</sup> - landless people who earn their living by means other than land - by working as casual labourers in the towns, by working in the carpet industry, animal husbandry, shopkeeping and so forth. Most of the qaribas are reported to have left Doniq for large cities. There is little chance, however for increased population or families to receive land - the crucial resource of income. The best chance a man has of possessing land is to inherit a landholding from his father or agnatic kin. Yet the plot of land belonging to one family is often too small to provide an adequate livelihood for, say, two or three or more families which have branched out from the original household. Often when the holding of a family is broken up by inheritance into units which are too small to afford a livelihood to a family, the new owners either sell the holding, or the joint heirs lease their shares to one of their members and they themselves emigrate to the towns in search of permanent or casual employment.

#### Economic, Political and Social Positions of Doniq:

In recent years great changes have occurred in the political, social and economic bases of Doniq, in which changes women seem to have played major roles. Therefore the emphasis of this chapter is on the past history of Doniq, recent changes which have occurred, the social factors leading to alterations and the roles played by women in the movement towards change.

In Iran, until the land reforms of 1960-62, land was still a fundamental source of income usually in the hands of wealthy proprietors who were absentee landlords, living in the towns,

1. qariba in Turkish and xošnešin in Persian is a word which is part of the popular vocabulary of country areas. Taken literally, xošnešin means 'good-sitter', an imprecise term which is used both for men who are casual labourers and also to apply to the minority of villagers who do not work on the land, people like shop keepers and artisans. But the vast majority are in the former, poor category. See E. Hoogland, "The Khwushnishin Population of Iran", in Iranian Studies, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1973), pp. 229-45.



though the composition of the land-owning group had altered repeatedly with the social and political changes through which Iran had gone. The landowners formed a small elite class, the so-called "thousand families", many of whom had come into prominence during or after the time of Reza Shah (1921-41). They are believed to have owned 85 per cent of the land under cultivation in Iran.<sup>1</sup>

Lambton (1953) has grouped these landowners according to their backgrounds: (1) members of the royal family and the leading families associated with the military services and with the civil service, who had obtained their land by inheritance, conquest, gift, or purchase, or who had acquired it as a perquisite of office; (2) tribal *xāns*, who were sometimes also members of the ruling family or of the official classes, and who had received their land in the same way; (3) clergy who had been given grants and pensions in the form of land from the state or who had inherited land or in some cases obtained it by usurpation of vaqf property; (4) relative newcomers to land ownership who were previously agents of the landlords, individuals who used their position to obtain land and merchants who bought large areas of land as speculation, and finally there was a small class of peasant landowners, although this category of proprietor was not to be found in all parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> According to a source which calculates land ownership in terms of percentage of the available land 50 per cent belonged to absentee landowners, 25 per cent to the vaqf, 10 per cent to the public and royal domain, and 13 per cent belonged to the peasant class of society.<sup>3</sup>

The most important and common way of working the land were

1. J.D. Arasteh, Iranian Family Life in a Changing Society, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1960), p.74.

2. A.K.S. Lambton, Landlord and Peasant in Persia, (London, 1953), pp. 261-2.

3. Quoted in Arasteh, *op.cit.*, p.75. Cf. F. Halliday, Iran: Dictatorship and Development, (London, 1979), p.107.



crop-sharing agreements between landlord and peasants; less often the latter had a tenancy agreement. The crop-sharing system, in which the peasant worked on the land for a share in the product, varied considerably from area to area, being mainly regulated by local custom and influenced by the nature of the farming, whether dry or irrigated; the type of irrigation, and the type of crop grown. But the commonest pattern was that the land was in fact handed over to peasants who cultivated it and the crop was to be divided into five, according to five inputs - land, labour, water, draught animals and seed; one share was allotted to each element and went to whoever provided that element.<sup>1</sup> Because of this inequitable distribution of the land and of the crop-sharing system, all the villages of Iran were divided or stratified according to class. A typical class division, (if a typical case existed) comprised, in addition to wealthy absentee landlords, peasant proprietors - xurdah mālīh - who worked on their own small parcels of land and whose members, as it was noted before, were very limited. After the landowners there existed 'middlemen' - qāvband - who would provide oxen and other implements to the peasants; but who did not work in the fields themselves. This 'middleman' had an agreement with the landlord on the one hand and with the peasants on the other. He usually managed several ploughlands. The qāvband or oxen owners did not, however, form a large group; nor were they widely distributed. In addition to qāvband there were nasāq holders - cultivators with conventional and customary rights to cultivable land. Besides the nasāq holders, existed in the rural areas an inferior group of landless folk, some of whom had no relation with farming and grouped as qariba or xošnišīn such as artisans, traders and workers of various kinds and some others who formed the majority worked on the field - kargar-e kaš āvarzi, but with

1. Lambton (1953), op. cit., p. 306.

no right in land at all.<sup>1</sup>

Those whom I questioned, reported that this same social stratification and crop-sharing system had existed in Doniq. The total land within the boundaries of Doniq amounts to six dāngs or āxcā in the local dialect (approximately 600 hectares) of which a dāng is pasture, another dāng barren and waste land and four āxcā or dāngs composed of cultivated land. Before the land reform of 1962, two dāngs belonged to xurdah-mālih - 'peasant proprietors' - and another two dāngs were owned by an absentee landlord by the name of Heydar Āgā. Out of 96 families in Doniq during that period, thirty families were xurdah-mālih, working on their own lands, forty-eight families were rayyat - 'tenants' of the big landlord working on his two hundred hectares of land on the basis of the crop-sharing system, and the remaining eighteen families were qariba, who had no permanent share in the crop-sharing system and worked in the fields as casual labourers. The rayyat of Doniq rented land from the big landlord according to their own capacity and they supplied their own agricultural implements; seed, labour, water and draught animals and paid a fixed rent to the arbāb. The rent demanded by the arbāb was a fixed one meaning that whether or not the rayyat had a good harvest, they had to pay a fixed rent to the arbāb. The rent was paid in accordance with the size of the rented land. For a ponza (= 3 acres land) the rent was one bātmān (= 5 kg of wheat) in addition to five kg. of butter and a chicken. Or for each 100 acres worked cooperatively by rayyat the rent was 8 Tons = 8000 kg of wheat and 8 bātmān (40 kg of butter).

1. For detailed information about the villages' stratification and crop-sharing system, see Lambton (1953), op. cit., especially chapter sixteen; Nikki Keddie, "The Iranian Village before and after Land Reform", in H. Bernstein, Development and Underdevelopment, (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 68-91, and in particular, pp. 73-74; cf. N. Keddie, "The Iranian power structure and social change, 1800-1969", in International Journal of Middle East Studies, 2 (1971), pp. 3-20, and cf. N. Keddie, Iran: Religion, Politics and Society (London, 1980).

In addition to the arbab's share or rent, the peasant in Iran had to give presents to the arbab and his agents in order to protect their rights to tenancy. Moreover, in most areas, especially in Āzarbāyjān, a poll-tax (Sarāneh) and dues for entertaining the government's officials and travellers were levied on the peasant. This tax was known in Āzarbāyjān as gonāq-līx. Besides, since villages were self-supporting and self-contained units, the villagers had developed a technique of local administration and some degree of self-help which was funded by making deductions from the villagers' harvest.<sup>1</sup> Though the villagers were protected to some extent by the central government from marauding tribesmen and bandits, they nonetheless faced another kind of insecurity brought about by extortion which was widely practised by government officials as a means of supplementing their own insufficient salaries.<sup>2</sup>

The combination of these conditions, including the primitive agricultural methods, the inadequacy of the water supply and the heavy demands made upon it, the inadequacy of the land, the frequency of crop-failure, the burden of the various dues deducted from the villagers' profits for different purposes, heavy taxation by the state and the social and political insecurity of the peasant whether xurdah-mālih, rayyat or casual labourer, brought the village people to dire poverty, living in terrible conditions. Another important factor which contributed to the poverty of the peasants was, as Lambton noted in 1953:

"inadequate communication and costly means of transport which adds to his costs of production and makes it more difficult for him to do anything but sell his goods at the nearest market at whatever price is offered. The almost permanent state of need and the series of temporary crises which are the normal concomitant of peasant life force him to dispose of his produce immediately after harvest if it is not already pledged before. This means that he has no alternative but to sell or barter

1. Lambton (1953) op. cit., pp. 334-37.

2. Ibid, pp. 385-86.

"his surplus crops at the period when prices are lowest. Barter is more usual than sale. If, moreover, his reserves are exhausted before the winter is over, as is often the case, he then has to buy when prices are at their peak..."<sup>1</sup>

It was no surprise that poverty and debt were always among the curses of rural life in Persia. The peasants of Doniq, both rayyat and peasant proprietors testified to the reality of this situation, pointing out that more often than not they exhausted their reserves before the winter was over and needed an advance to feed themselves and their families, to replace agricultural implements and to buy seed and meet other current expenses. Very often they had to sell their crops before they were harvested and borrow money from money lenders (merchants from the town, shop keepers or the big landlord) at a very high rate such as 50 or 85 per cent, planning to repay the money at harvest time. As a matter of fact, due to economic pressure, the villagers were often unable to pay the money back in time, and had either to sell their belongings and draught animals or to forfeit their lands to the big landowners and money lenders and leave the village for the towns in search of jobs. Talking in a voice full of bitterness about the relations between the arbāb and the rayyat, a fifty year old man told me,

"One day I went to Heydar Aga (the big landowner) to borrow seven Tomāns (50 pence) to take my wife to the doctor. He threw me out of his room hurling insults after me. The second time when I went to him to ask for the money again, pleaded to him with tears. He agreed to lend the money to me on the condition that I returned it with the addition of five kg of butter and 10 kg of wheat as its interest. I had to accept the condition, because I had no alternative. If the repayment was overdue by one day, the arbāb would send his agent to beat us up and generally harass us."

1. Lambton (1953), op. cit., pp. 380-81.



The villagers of Doniq were unable to estimate the amount of their annual average income during that period. But they said that no families had enough food and clothes and they were always hungry. They borrowed each others' clothes when they went out and women and children always wore tattered clothes so that most parts of their bodies were uncovered.<sup>1</sup>

A survey of multi-village samples carried out in 1954 under the auspices of the Iranian authorities gives a rough picture of the annual income of Iranian villages, taking into account regional variations. In this survey, the median income for all peasant families was shown to stand at \$ 112 (8425 Rials), though the incomes of the casual agricultural labourers were not calculated separately and since their wages were included in the incomes of the peasants who paid them, the median income appears as too high.<sup>2</sup>

Some villagers in Iran tried to supplement their insufficient income by carpet weaving mainly performed by the female members of the family (Lambton, p. 277); but in Doniq the carpet industry was not a customary source of income, though it was known in the village. People simply could not raise the capital to invest in the necessary materials. Informants also reported that people were unable to keep flocks. Some people owned one or two animals, but very often dupāydāri was customary in Doniq, meaning that the villagers borrowed or rented animals as dupāy from the city people for a fixed period. The rent was paid in kind per annum - 10 kg of butter for each cow, though

1. These conditions were not restricted to Doniq. A sample survey carried out in 1954 reports appalling living conditions in many villages of Iran. In some areas, the staple food supply of the peasants was observed to be clover and locusts. The majority of the people suffered from serious illnesses and paid interest rates varying from 240-800 per cent per annum... Cited in Keddie, "Iranian Villages before...", op. cit., p. 75.

2. Keddie, "Iranian Villages before...", op. cit., p. 72. Cf. Lambton, (1953) op. cit., p. 277 and Arasteh, op. cit., p.129.



all the expenses of raising the beasts were met by the peasant. When the fixed period for hire was over, the cattle were sold, their value being estimated by the age of each animal when it was rented by the owner, and the interest being shared between the dupāydār and the owner. In the event of the death from natural causes of any of the buffaloes in the custody of the peasant, the peasant was not held responsible, but if any losses occurred which could be attributed to his negligence he had to pay compensation to the owner amounting to half the value of the animal lost.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole sheer poverty was the main feature of peasant life in Doniq. It was reported that many extended families lived in one room, dividing it into compartments by a pardah (curtain) allocating a section of the room to the family flock, because they were unable to construct a stable. They led a really harsh and primitive life. There was no shop in the village, only a čarči - 'pedlar'-who occasionally visited the village. People did not have much contact with the town or with the town's market. There was a bumpy road which might be negotiated only on horseback connecting the village to the town by way of rivers that had no bridges. Those who gave me information on this subject said that once in every three or four months people would make the expedition to the town in groups

1. This custom is still current in Doniq, but with the difference that nowadays the prosperous and well-off families of Doniq play the role once played by town people, renting animals to fellow villagers. In relation to the renting of animals by peasants, Lambton (1953) notes similar contracts in other areas of Iran. She mentions two sorts of contract: tarāz and dandāni. Under the conditions of the tarāz contract, buffaloes are rented for a set length of time and at a fixed rent per head per annum (normally 4-6 manni Tabriz, which is equal to approximately 26lb-39lb). At the end of the rental period, when the beasts are returned to their owners, any calves produced by the animals while rented out are shared equally between owner and farmer, or an estimated value is discussed and the farmer is given half of that sum, the calves going to the herd owner. The farmer may profit from his efforts as a herdsman by making 5-6 manni Tabriz in a good year (33-39lbs) of clarified butter. On the other hand the dandāni contract guarantees for the herd owner the return of animals equal in number and in age to those in the herd at the time it was rented out. Surplus beasts are kept by the herdsman. See Lambton (1953), op. cit., pp. 350-51.

by donkey or by horse, to purchase the supplies of tea, sugar, oil and other necessities. A few weeks before setting out for the town, one of the villagers would be appointed to travel on horseback around the village, and neighbouring villages to announce the projected journey - Jarčahmayh - and gather companions for the trip. The reason for this was that people often encountered wolves, especially in wintertime, or they might meet with stormy weather. While crossing a river they might become accidentally stuck in the water with their horse and the produce they had bought. It was obviously to their advantage to make the journey in groups so that they could cooperate in tackling difficulties. The villagers said that they had lost so many people in the nearby river that they had called it qānni gōl - 'the bloody lake'. Although they laid in flour and fodder for the wintertime when it was most dangerous and difficult to go to the town, they could not afford to stock up with sugar, tea, oil and etc., and so they often went without them for weeks at a time.

As regards education and public health services in Persian rural areas Lambton noted in 1953 that,

"public health and education services do not cover all rural districts. For the most part they are found only in the less remote districts. The low standard of living of the peasant makes it impossible for health and education services to be to any extent self-supporting, while the absence of such services helps to perpetuate the prevailing standards. Further, the absence of amenities in rural districts makes the average doctor reluctant to practise in the villages... The result is that doctors are few and far between in the rural districts, and there are hardly any nurses. Medicines are insufficient and often costly... In the remoter areas, if the peasant or one of his family falls ill, he has to make a long journey to the nearest town. If it is midwinter the road may well be under snow and the journey difficult, while if it is harvest time or the sowing season he can ill spare the time to make such a journey... In such circumstances it is not surprising that disease

"takes a heavy toll - how heavy it is impossible to estimate. Malaria is endemic and, with secondary diseases, probably in great loss of life also. Trachoma is widespread. Infant mortality by all accounts is unduly high. In addition, sporadic outbreaks of minor infectious diseases such as measles often take a heavy toll in the villages, owing to the absence of doctors, nurses, and medicines."<sup>1</sup>

The state of health of the people of Doniq was certainly not far from the position noted by Lambton in other rural areas of Iran. In corroboration of Lambton's report, a thirty-five year old informant from Doniq complained,

"Three years ago, before the construction of the village road, one of my teeth gave me a great deal of trouble. Although my husband could have afforded to take me to the dentist in the town, because it was harvest time and he was so busy in the field, he couldn't spare time to make such a long journey; five hours by donkey. Besides, I was in my ninth month of pregnancy and we thought that the journey might have been too dangerous for me. Therefore my husband decided to extract my tooth himself. He put my head between his knees and after dragging me around for more than an hour, pulled my tooth out. The socket bled for a whole month..."

There was no school whatsoever, and no formal education in Doniq during the period I have been discussing. Only a few men from some land-owning households of the Bay clan, who could afford to keep a mullā (religious leader) in the village, supplying his food, his bed and his other necessities, received religious education and learned how to read the Quran. Except for these few men, all the members of the community were illiterate. In addition to the impoverished conditions of the peasant in Doniq, villagers reported that they had suffered very keenly from the oppression and injustice of the arbāb, his agents - Mobašīr, kad xudā - the village leader and other state offic-

1. Lambton, (1953), p. 390. Cf. Arasteh, op. cit., p. 130.

ials. As in other villages of Iran, in Doniq, the arbāb - 'big landlord' - and the kad xudā - his agent and the village leader, were politically and economically the only dominant figures. All political, social and economic affairs of the people were under their control. Under a law which came into effect in 1935, the kad xudā became the representative of the big landowners and responsible for law and order in the villages. The kad xudā was to oversee agricultural affairs in accordance with the orders of the landowner, collect his levies and dues from the peasant, to settle minor disputes among people and report the major problems of the villages to the nearest gendarmerie post. In other words, the kad xudā was the servant of the landowner, and the guardian of his interests.<sup>1</sup>

People of Doniq reported longstanding complaints about their position of subjection to the arbāb and the village chief claiming that these men had violated their nāmus - 'womenfolk'<sup>2</sup> and the legal rights of the villagers.

Under the crop-sharing system, there was no written contract between landowner and peasants. The contract was always verbal and unclear; therefore, the arbāb could do anything that would benefit him. Villagers of Doniq emphasized that,

"More often than not it turned out that after we had taken the trouble to plough, sow and irrigate the land, we would learn at harvest time that the land and its produce had been transferred to

1. Lambton, (1953), op. cit., pp. 190-93.

2. My investigations brought to light the fact that in most of the villages owned by big landlords, it was the custom that a bride on her wedding night, had first to satisfy the landlord's desire and then go to her bridal chamber. There are also instances reported of the rape of tenants' wives and daughters by the arbāb and his relatives without their being prosecuted. See Keddie, Iran: Religion, Politics.. op. cit., p. 183. Fortunately these sorts of events did not take place in Doniq, but people told me that women were not free from the arbāb's matalayh - sarcastic sexual remarks.



"another peasant who was economically more powerful and could afford to present a sheep or a chicken to the arbāb. The Arbāb along with the village leader and the few wealthy people of Doniq, really exploited us. There was no one, no impartial authority to whom we could go to plead for justice. The state's officials supported the arbāb and his agent. We were afraid to complain about anything because we ourselves might then be charged, beaten up and imprisoned..."

Against this background Lambton (1953) notes that,

"all over Iran resort to law is a lengthy process and even when made there is little guarantee that the decision reached will be impartial or impartially carried out. In any case it is virtually out of the question for the peasant. He has little chance of successful appeal against the landlord, who is usually able to influence the giving of a decision and its execution in his own favour, and still less against the official."<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, the big landowner used to go to houses and take note if a peasant had a valuable object. He immediately ordered his agent to transfer it from the peasant's house to his own. In his presence villagers had to kneel as a sign of respect. An informant said that once he had been beaten up badly by the arbāb's agent, because he had forgotten to kneel and sat in a degree of comfort. Whenever the landowner came to the village, the rayyat had to run hurriedly to meet him and walk his horse about the village until it had cooled down. There are many cases of this kind; to give an account of them all is unnecessary. In short, the arbāb loomed large in every aspect of the villagers' lives - economic, social and political, and he was supported by the state officials. In addition to oppression and pressure by the landlord and his agents, the villagers of Doniq were vulnerable to pillage by outside tribal leaders. Several times, Doniq was plundered and the target was, as the

1. Lambton, (1953), op. cit., p. 386.



people themselves reported it, the few animals by which they subsisted.

In relation to the power and political structure of Doniq, it seems appropriate to refer briefly to the hierarchical relationship of three tribes of Doniq, which was, in turn, influenced by landownership and by the chief landowner and in other influential members of society.

The village community is formed of three Tāyfās or tribes: the Bay, Tāt and Xalaš. Out of 103 families in Doniq, forty-nine are members of the Bay, thirty-nine belong to the Tāt, 10 others form the clan of Xalaš, while the tribal origin of the six other families is not known. Each tāyfā is subdivided into smaller localized groups known as tira. There might be from two up to seven such small sections in each tāyfā. The tira core is a group which varies in number from three to twenty families of blood kinship who trace descent patrilineally from a common forebear three or four generations back. The tira is usually named after this ancestor. People of Doniq assured me that the ancestors of the Bay clan belonged originally to Doniq, but the ancestors of the other tāyfās had come from outside. They did not know where they might have come from. However an old man remembered hearing it told by members of an earlier generation of his family that, a long time previously the Bay clan had brought a few Xalaš from neighbouring vill-villages - (Ahmad-Ābād, Asgar Ābād and Bijand) to help them in the fields. They had stayed in Doniq and thus today's Xalaš are the descendents of those same few Xalaš.<sup>1</sup> No one

1. The Xalaš tribe may be the descendants of the same tribe as the 'Khalaj' tribe to which Minorsky refers. Minorsky writes that the Khalaj Turks are the putative ancestors of the well-known Afghan tribe Ghalzay (Ghilzā'i-Ghilā'i). In favour of this idea he quotes a passage from Jihān-nāma written about A.D.1200-20 by Mohammad b. Najīb Bakān: "The Khalaj are a tribe of Turks who from the khallukh (Tukhārestān) emigrated to zābulistān. Among the districts of Ghaznī there is a steppe where they reside. Then on account of the heat of the air their complexion has changed and tended towards blackness; the language, too, has undergone alterations and become a different dialect. A tribe of this group went to Bāvard (Khurāsān) and founded (cont'd)

knew the history of the Tāt clan either.<sup>1</sup> After the landlord and kad xudā, the Bay tribe was at the top of the social ladder in Doniq. It was powerful and the people enjoyed a certain degree of social prestige inherited from their ancestors and had privileges not held by the other two clans. One of the reasons for the superiority of the Bay lay in their ownership of land. Land was one of the surest guarantees of providing its owner with increased social standing and political 'clout', quite apart from any income it might yield.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, anyone who

some settlements. By mistake (in writing) the people call the khallukh khalaj." See V. Minorsky (ed.), Hudud Al-'Ālam (Oxford, 1930), pp. 396-48.

On the other hand, the Xalaš tribe of Doniq and other parts of Iran if members of this tribe are to be found elsewhere than in Doniq might be the descendants of the same Khalaj or Khallukh whose pronunciation might have changed in the course of time.

1. Tāt is a Persian tribe (Rabino, 1928, p.63), and Dehxodā also describes Tāt as a tribe of Persian origin and among Persian speaking tribes. He says that in Caucasia those Persians who speak Persian are called Tāt. In Persia, the tribe of lor claim to be Persian Tāts... In short Dehxodā defines Tāt as Persian and Persian speaking and gives evidence that in most of the early writings of Persian and Arabic writers, the word Tāt usually means 'Persian'... But in fact the tribe of Tāt seems to have scattered all over Iran, speaking different dialects and languages. Jalāl Āl Ahmad gives an account of the Tāt tribe in Saqez Ābād and Ibrāhīm Ābād - two villages of Buluke-Zahrā in the south of Qazvin district in Iran. He writes that, unlike the people of other neighbouring villages of Buluke-Zahrā who speak the Turkish language, the Tāts of these two areas speak a dialect which is called Tāt by the people themselves. Tāt is certainly one of the oldest dialects of Persia, containing some traces of the vocabulary of the Mād tribe (who ruled in Iran from 708 to 655 B.C.). The author also points out that the Tāt of these areas are quite familiar with Turkish language and use many Turkish words in their dialects... In addition, Richard Tapper (1979) has reported finding the Tāt tribe among the Shahsevan nomads in Northwest Iran (Āzarbāyjan) who speak Turkish.

See, H.L. Rabino, Mazandarān and Astarābād, (London, 1928), p. 63; A.A. Dehxodā, Loḡat Nāmeḡ-ye Dehxodā, T. Tashbih, p. 44; A. Rāzi, Tarix-e Mofassal-e Iran, (Tehran, 1330.SH), p. 17; J. Āl-Ahmad, Tāt nesi nhā-ye buluk-e zahrā, (Tehran, 1337.SH); see especially, pp. 17-20; and R. Tapper, Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict and Ritual among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran, (London, 1979).

2. Lambton, (1953), op. cit., p. 262, cf. Arasteh, op. cit., p. 74.

had even a small piece of land, perhaps not sufficient for subsistence, benefitted none the less. He would have social power and prestige, using the power against the landless, weaker and poorer classes.

In Doniq, as already mentioned, 30 families were xurdah mālīh, owning altogether 200 acres of the cultivated land. Most of these 30 families were from the Bay clan and people of other clans were the rayyat of either the xurdah mālīh or the big landowner. Although the people of the Bay tribe were not better off than the other communities, because of the general agricultural problems mentioned earlier, in general their ownership of land had given them the upper hand over the Tāt and Xalaš. In addition, it was reported that the Bay were the descendants of two very well known brothers known as Safiyār Yuz Bāši and Ali Akbar Xān who were powerful landowners and important army commanders during the reign of Mozaffaraddin Shah (who ruled from 1896 A.D to 1906 A.D.) - whereas the ancestors of the other tribes are not known. Added to this was the fact that the village kad xudā (the village leader) had always been chosen by the state from the Bay clan, owing to their landowning status; and this was another source of power and influence for the Bay tribe. Thus, owning land, being the descendants of big landowners and influential people and being backed by the village authorities gave special privileges to the Bay over the community of Tāt and Xalaš. Many very deplorable stories are reported about the tribes' relationships. The village itself was divided into two sections: usually the central part of the village was the territory of the Bay clan while the area further out from the centre was allocated to the Tāt and Xalaš. Tāt or Xalaš were not allowed to be seen in or to pass through the quarter of the superior clan. If one of them appeared in the Bay's quarter, the latter's leader, who was also the village chief, would order his agents to capture the trespasser and bring him to the village meydān - 'square'-to be flogged. After being flogged, the victim had to make the chief a present

of a buffalo to guarantee his freedom. A Tāt emphasized that when they wanted to pass through the Bay quarter because of necessary affairs, they used to go through the area in trembling, and stealthily. A Bay woman said,

"The Tāt and Xalaš have now become very rude and daring, going about in our quarter very freely."

A member of the Bay, by the name of Šukrrullāh Yāvār was appointed by the village leader - Salmān Bay to be continuously on duty in front of the village mosque to keep a close watch on Tāt and Xalaš who were allowed to attend the mosque during religious months and on special occasions. If one of the latter tribes did not sit in the mosque in his proper place usually at the lower end, or wore his hat slightly obliquely which was a sign of social aspiration in the village culture, or referred to a Bay by his name without accompanying it with the title of Bay, Šukrrullāh Yāvār's duty was to write his name down and refer the man to Salmān Bay for punishment. Several Bay women told me that the wearing of white čādirā - 'veil', shoes and clothes, was special to the women of Bay. If one of the women from Tāt or Xalaš tried to wear a white dress or veil, the women of Bay tore off her clothes in the streets, leaving her uncovered. Of course some of these attitudes and hierarchical relationships had been mitigated by the intervention of government officials but the traditions still continued and, as it will be demonstrated later, still persist in Doniq to some extent. People of the three tribes twenty or thirty years ago never intermarried. A Bay always preferred to marry a Bay. If there was no suitable match within the Bay clan, the Bay tribesman preferred to marry an outsider rather than turning to another Doniq clan, because it was considered shameful and degrading to marry someone from an inferior clan. In the same manner, people of Tāt and Xalaš would marry outsiders if there was no suitable match among themselves, because they did not dare to ask for a bride from the so-



called superior clan.

The foregoing pages have presented, however, a historical consideration of the economic, political and social positions of Doniq twenty years ago as far as people themselves recalled it and as far as I could piece it together from early publications about the rural areas of Iran. From this point onwards I shall concentrate on those changes and developments that have taken place in Doniq in recent years and on the factors that were important in leading to these alterations.

### New Developments

One of the main factors which led to recent alterations in Doniq, was the national land reform of 1962-68. To give a detailed and comprehensive survey of the impact of the land reform on the overall social, political and economic organization of Doniq necessitates a preliminary consideration of the various features of the land reform and their effects on Iranian society as a whole. Also, sociologists and economists seem to look at the subject of the Iranian land reforms from different angles and to present varying and contradictory studies on the aims, effects, successes and failures of the programme throughout the country. Therefore to give a relatively clear picture of the land reforms as carried out in Iran, one can hardly avoid going into considerable detail.

The land reform programme, has been controversial, both in its stated purposes, and in its effects. The government, and those who have been in sympathy with the government, have seen reform as a facet of the "white revolution", a step towards freeing the people completely from the tyranny of the land magnate. On the other hand left-wing critics feel that the reforms shielded an official plot to establish a "bourgeoisie" outside the towns. At the bottom of this new social ladder the poorest



peasant farmers might fare even worse than before.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of other sources (Lambton 1969 and Josephine Dillion, 1976) it seems that neither of these suggestions and interpretations can be accurate.<sup>2</sup> Both critics and admirers of the land reforms have analysed the forces that brought it about, and it is interesting to note that neither side in the controversy claims that the land reforms have been caused by unrest among the rural poor. Indeed there does not appear to have been any unrest. To many observers the necessity for such reform was evident. The distribution of many large estates under preceding movement - The Gilān Republic of 1917-21, the Āzarbāyjān autonomous Republic of 1945-6 and Mussadeq's government of 1951-53, had, in fact, prepared the background for the land reform. Another advocate of land reform from the mid 1940s onwards was Hassan Arsanjāni, a radical liberal who later on became Minister of Agriculture under the reformist government dominated by Premier Ali Amini which passed land reform laws. But when it came about and by what impetus is another story.

In the late 1950s Iran again experienced winds of political change and unrest which had earlier propelled the upsurge of the Tudeh Party and Dr. Mussadeq's National Front. This was also linked with sharp economic recession and inflation which eventually prompted the United States to offer aid while demanding a relative economic reform in order to stabilize the Shah. Against this background, in the aftermath of a National Front demonstration by students (a rally which ended in violent police involvement), and of a teachers' strike which was also

1. Cf. D.R. Denman, The King's Vista, (London, 1973); see his article, "Land Reforms of Shah and People", in G. Lenczowski, Iran under the Pahlavis, (Stanford, 1978), pp. 252-301; Halliday, op. cit., chapter 5, and M. Sodāgar, Barassi Eslāhāt-e Arzi, (Tehran, 1979).

2. A.K.S. Lambton, The Persian Land Reform, 1962-1966, (Oxford, 1969), pp. 61-62, and J. Dillion, Carpet Capitalism and Craft Involution in Kirman, Iran: A study in Economic Anthropology, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1976), p. 160.

violent, the Shah invited Amini to form a new government.<sup>1</sup> Some members of Amini's cabinet are considered to have had links with the Tudeh Party and the National Front and Amini is said to have been an open critic of the government. In this respect, it might not seem clear why Ali Amini was chosen for this job. Lambton clarifies this point. Amini's appointment, she notes, is likely to have been associated with the country's foreign policy. She goes still further and suggests that the belief that assistance from the U.S.A. in the future depended on financial reform (in Iran) - a change possible only if masterminded by someone of the mental astuteness of Dr. Amini, was probably a factor of considerable importance when the choice of a Prime Minister had to be made.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Dillion notes that,

"the fact that Amini's cabinet contained men with 'leftish' pasts was an asset, for ironically, the reforms that creditors such as the U.S.A. were now demanding were of the sort that Dr. Mussadeq's government had attempted. These reforms, in addition to satisfying international creditors, would appease the Shah's domestic opposition."<sup>3</sup>

However, Arsanjani who had long before this advocated the necessity of a land reform and had formulated the first stage of the land reform took up what was temporarily a key position as the result of an intricate interplay of hostile forces. Ministers such as Amini and Arsanjani were to some extent representative of those intellectuals forward-looking and leaning politically towards the left, who saw land reform as a means of bringing about the extinction of the backward-looking landlord class. The Shah, on the other hand, waved the banner of revolution, but used the much talked-of land reform as a means

1. Lambton, (1969), op. cit., p. 61.

2. Lambton, *ibid.*

3. Dillion, op. cit., p. 160.

of tightening his grip on the affairs of the people.<sup>1</sup>

In any case, the land reform began in 1962 and officially ended in 1971. It was carried out in three phases coming into effect in 1962, 1964 and 1968 respectively and had different effects in different districts of Iran. Laws passed in 1962 provided: (1) that no landlord could continue to hold more than one village (6 dāngs) or the equivalent in portions of villages; (2) the indemnification of the landowners for their losses was to be based on the taxation they had paid on their properties; (3) land was to be redistributed to those who were already farming land, with priority going to those who provided more than labour alone. This meant that oxen owners had first priority. Then came Nasaq holders with labourers following at the end; (4) membership of a cooperative was a pre-requisite for the obtaining of land; (5) various important categories of land were exempted from the redistribution. These included: orchards; plantations, and gardens; lands tilled by mechanical methods and wage labour; (6) those peasants receiving land had to pay the value of the land itself and a further 10 per cent in instalments within 10 years (a period later extended to 15). This payment was to be made to the state, from which the land owners were to be compensated in the same way.<sup>2</sup>

During the first stage, according to official estimates which included partially re-distributed villages as "reformed", only some 12,000-13,000 villages out of an overall figure of approximately 48,000-54,000 villages were re-distributed. One critical study showed that only the equivalent of about 5,000 villages, or 10% of all the available farming or agricultural land, was actually re-alloted by the official date for the end of the first

1. Dillion, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

2. Lambton (1969), *op. cit.*, pp. 62-69.

stage - 1964.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, most of the villages and the majority of Iran's peasants were left untouched by the first stage of changes. This and the generally exaggerated expectations about the outcome of the land reform which had been aroused by the politicians' pre-reform propaganda, resulted in disappointment and unrest among the rural people in certain parts of the country. In response additional clauses were added to the 1962 Law, and these amendments came to be known in 1964 as the second phase of the land reform.<sup>2</sup> This stage was designated to take into account the peasant-landlord relations in such areas as had not been affected during the first stage. Under the second stage, the landowners who had retained their land for one reason or another were to be faced with five alternatives; (1) They could opt to rent the land to peasants on a long-term tenancy (30 years), in which case the rent would be payable in a cash sum based on the previous years' average shares of the crop and subject to five-yearly revision; (2) They might settle by mutual agreement to sell the land to peasants; (3) They could divide the land with the peasants holding back for themselves a section equal to the share of the crop formerly received from the entire land. (4) They might establish joint stock companies in which landlord and peasant would each hold equal numbers of shares; (5) They could agree to purchase land from peasants. If the landlord chose to rent out his land as a tenancy, this was his prerogative, but division of the land in accordance with the earlier crop-sharing agreement, formation of an agricultural unit, or the purchase of the peasants' rights were alternatives that needed the peasants' consent.<sup>3</sup>

1. Keddie, "Iranian village before...", op. cit., p. 83; and cf. Halliday, op. cit., p. 110.

2. Lambton, 1969, op. cit., pp. 104, 106-8 and 194-5.

3. Lambton, (1969), p. 207.



Although the second phase of land reform was expected to assist peasant farmers who had not benefitted from the earlier stage, what actually took place was a slowing down of the land-redistribution process. The new laws did very little other than to clarify the rights of the peasants in relation to their landlords. By virtue of the legal arrangements set up in this phase many landowners found ways of retaining their property. Out of a million farmers (if we include their families the number rises to 11.4 million) affected by this stage, only 199,000 former tenants received land while the remaining peasants "affected" received no land at all.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it can be seen that the arrangements carried out under phase two were inadequate, especially since agricultural productivity was not rising to meet demand and peasants were reported to be resisting tenancy arrangements. The outcome was that in 1968 a further land reform law, known as the third stage, was put forward. This stage was designed to convert the arrangements regarding tenancy worked out during phase two into ownership. Land which was affected by sections one and four of phase two - the tenanted and joint stock company and all land-property still held by landlords following the first two phases of the land reform - was designated now as either to be sold to the peasants or shared between the landlord and the peasant in proportion to their contribution of "agricultural factors" which had been provided by each. In reality these alternatives were no different from alternatives (2) and (3) of the second stage. The first of these required the landlord's consent and the second supplied the peasant with virtually no land gain.<sup>2</sup>

In combination, phases one to three seem to have distributed land to 1,638,000 families; 6,901,000 under stage one, 210,000

1. Keddie, "Iranian village before...", op. cit., p. 87.

2. Dillion, op. cit., p. 172.



under phase two and 738,000 during phase three. However these statistics of 1.6 million families is below half the total number of rural families in Iran. Apart from during the earliest stage of land reforms, those making the changes appear to have been making a show of reform and justice without actually transferring land to the peasants.

In summary, from a general assessment of the net results and effects of the land reform in various districts of Iran, it appears that in some villages, the power of big land proprietors who had been socially, economically and politically dominant, had been eliminated. Of course, in these parts of the country the former landowners increasingly found their way into the worlds of bureaucracy and industry by using compensation money as an alternative means of access to wealth and power. In many other areas a substantial number of landowners were able to keep their property and preserve former power by taking evasive action of various kinds such as bribing the land reform organization and presenting antedated documents which purported to show the transfer of the owner's land, shared among his relatives at a date before the reform law was passed.<sup>1</sup> Some landowners were successful in retaining their holdings by turning to their advantage the contradictory features of the land reform and discovering loopholes helpful to them while they simply appeared to comply with stipulated exemptions. Another general reason, suggested by Lambton for widely differing results and effects of the land reform in various districts were the variations in social, economic and political conditions which were to be seen locally. In some parts of the country where the peasants were least aware of the outside world, or were most impoverished and most economically and socially subject and dependent on the landowner or where the landowners derived a large percentage of their income from the land and lived close to their landholdings, the landowners managed most

1. Lambton, (1969), p. 116.

successfully to resist reform. These conditions were typical in approximate terms of the South West, South and South East of Iran. On the other hand, the reform measures were more effective in regions where opposite conditions prevailed, roughly speaking in the North West (Āzarbāyjān) and in the North of the country.<sup>1</sup>

In general, the land reform did not solve the problem of pre-existing stratification or social inequality and inequity of land distribution among peasants, but merely intensified it. The laws of the land reform were based on the previous crop-sharing system as it had prevailed in Iranian villages. In other words, the pre-reform hierarchical social structure discussed in previous pages provided a context in which the land reform took place. It gave preference in the distribution of land to privileged classes - to the Nasaq or land holder who had a traditional right in a buneh or crop-sharing system and to oxen owners - those who contributed to the system more than just their labour. As the result, as Keddie notes, 47.7 per cent of the total population, who were the most deprived before land reform because they had nothing to offer but their labour, did not benefit from the redistribution.<sup>2</sup> The big capitalist landowners and the villagers who already owned land were the greatest beneficiaries of the farming reforms. This was because they used machinery to work the ground or hired wage-earning labourers and so won exemption from reorganization of their property. These categories of landowners now reaped the benefits of modern farming techniques, while the landless agricultural workers gained nothing - no fixed minimum wages, no unemployment benefits, no gleaning rights (on privately owned farmland), and no title to land.<sup>3</sup>

1. Lambton, (1969), pp. 87-8, 125-127.

2. Keddie, "The Iranian village before...", op. cit., pp. 78-79.

3. Keddie, Iran: Religion, Politics..., op. cit., p. 151.

Lambton points out that there were "practical" reasons for so limiting the reform. To hand out land to agricultural workers as well as to those who had held rights in the ploughlands would have necessitated alteration of the village field lay-out (nasaq). This in turn would have involved the making of land surveys, and would have meant delay in the implementation of the land reform. It should also be considered that the distribution of land to agricultural labourers who had not had rights over ploughland earlier might, as Lambton notes,

"also have led to conflict within the village and consequently have interfered with agricultural production."<sup>1</sup>

This is thought by Dillion to be inaccurate. One must keep in mind the social bitterness generated by the revolutionary policies of the Soviet Union and China which were aimed at eliminating inequity of a social and economic nature among peasants. There, however, the resentment and disruption of society was ignored by the revolutionary regimes and allowed to burn itself out.<sup>2</sup>

The question as to whether the land reform scheme has been able to introduce modern farming methods and convert the traditional patterns of Iranian agriculture into a capitalist relationship is under lively debate. The cash rents, large farmers and the exempting of mechanized farms with hired labour in some districts are indications of a shift towards capitalism, increased productivity and investment. But in many other areas, even if they are covered by the land reform, old patterns of working the land still continue with old attitudes and old ownership patterns.

A further result of the land reform programme in the country-

1. Lambton, (1969), p. 47.

2. Dillion, op. cit., p. 165.

side of Iran is the establishment of the economic, social and political power of the state through the institutions of village councils (established in 1963-64), Cooperatives (1964); literacy corps (1963), health corps (1964), and farm corporations (1967). Finally as is not denied by the critics of the land reform, important changes have been introduced in the psychology of landlord-peasant relationship. In land reform villages, the cultivation has been improved, more land has been brought under cultivation, and there has been a marked increase in the use of fertilizer, because the villagers place a high value on their own land and work hard. There has been a rise in peasants' income and standard of living, a reduction in their pre-harvest sale of crops and in their borrowing of funds and an increase in attempts to raise the standards of living by building better houses and public utilities.<sup>1</sup>

#### Effect on Landownership in Doniq

Now it must be asked what effects the land reforms had on the village of Doniq, taking into account both the extent of the land redistribution and the changes in the living standards of the peasants.

In Āzarbāyjān, as already noted, Tudeh Party activities gave the local people a relatively keen awareness of what was going on in the outside world. As a result the peasants were less amenable to the pressure of the landlord than elsewhere in the country and they enjoyed certain characteristics of independence, toughness and shrewdness, which helped them set up conditions favourable to land reform.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising that among the villages bought by the state and distributed among the peasants under the first stage of land reform, the largest

1. Lambton, (1969), op. cit., pp. 344-48, and Keddie, "Iranian villages before...", op. cit., p. 85.

2. Lambton, (1969), p. 127.



number was in the East Āzarbāyjān district. Doniq is one of the villages of East Āzarbāyjān where land reform has taken place and has had relatively positive results.

Under the first phase of the reform, out of 400 acres of cultivable land within the boundaries of Doniq, the 200 acres which had belonged to the absentee big landlord were redistributed. His land had been cultivated by 48 rayyat (peasants who rented land from the big-landowner on the basis of a fixed rent and who themselves supplied the means of cultivation - seed, labour, water and draught animals) and 18 qariba (families who worked as casual labourers and had no implements to bring to the field in exchange for using the land), mainly Tāt and Xalaš. Portions of varying size were now distributed among the 48 rayyat families of Tāt and Xalaš. The remaining 18 families of qariba - did not receive any land at all. The total value of the received land was to be paid to the landlord through the Agricultural Bank in 15 annual instalments. About 150 Toman (£9.375) is paid in cash per ponzā (3 acres) per year.

The remaining 200 acres which had been owned and worked by 30 families who were mostly members of the Bay clan, remained untouched. Indeed, some Bays who were wealthy and could afford to rent an extra parcel of land from the big landowner, received this land in addition to their own plots. However, in the course of time the land owned by the Bay has been split up into small plots through inheritance by new generations of the Bay. At present, out of 103 households in Doniq, six households own land of between nine to fifteen acres in area, 18 are landless (qariba) and the remaining 79 families own between one and four acres (including fallow).

Briefly, although land reform made some peasants in Doniq independent land owners, freeing them from the domination of the big-landlord and the crop-sharing system, it did not solve the



problem of social inequality and inequity of land distribution among the peasants. As the result of the reform, the land in Doniq was reorganized and redistributed, but on the basis of the pre-existing crop-sharing or tenancy system. That is, those of peasants who had been economically more privileged, received more land, in accordance with the size of land they had rented and cultivated before the land reform. Consequently, very few peasants have received parcels of land (between 9-15 acres), the productivity of which exceeds the immediate needs of the owners, giving them extra produce to exchange for cash in the market. Some others who form the major part of the population, have been awarded land (ranging from 1 acre to 4) which is below their subsistence requirements and the owners have to take on extra work to supplement the basic needs of their families. And finally there are families who made up the most impoverished and deprived section of the village community before the land reform - gariba - and received no land, no protection or compensation for their unemployment. This last group, who have not received any land, more importantly, who have lost even the gleaning rights on privately-owned holdings, have had no alternative but to leave the village for the major cities in search of jobs, often facing considerable problems of lack of job opportunities, housing shortages and other difficulties characteristic of city immigrant life.

#### Bearing of the Land Reform on Agricultural Work

Agriculture is the basis of Doniq's economy and land is the principal source of livelihood for all the people. Although land ownership has altered under the reform, land as a crucial resource is still vested in men and is mainly organized by them. No woman was reported to be allotted land under the land redistribution. Despite the generalization of a prominent Iranian sociologist (B. Parham, 1970) that the land reform

"represented a victory of the new capitalism over



Ploughing.

"the traditional rural system and the opening of the countryside to the machine and capital "<sup>1</sup>,

in Doniq the situation is much more ambiguous and the generalization is far from being true, even if it might be true in other areas of the country.

Farmers in Doniq continue to exploit the land in the same traditional and extremely primitive way. Two principal crops - wheat and barley - are harvested in Doniq in late autumn. Immediately after the harvest in autumn (November) another part of a holding which is traditionally left fallow to renew its fertility, is ploughed ready for the second sowing of wheat. Ploughing is carried out by an iron nail plough - drawn by an ox. It takes many days for a farmer to plough his small plot since he has to go over it three or four times. There are two tractors in the village which belong to the well-to-do. These tractors are available for hire to the villagers. But the rent of them is said to be high - 90 Tomān (£6) per hour which is not a viable proposition for the farmers. Wheat is sown in late autumn, and later, shortly after the new year the April sowing takes place. The farmers spend most nights during spring and summer awake, bringing water to the land from a river in Ardahā - 'a neighbouring village' - five kilometers from Doniq. They have to transport the water over rocky ground by the light of a paraffin lamp, since there is no electricity.

In addition, they worry about adequate rainfall between April and July the period when rain is essential to a good crop. Failure of the rains may mean starvation. Farmers in the rainy months spend many a pleasant conversation trying to predict whether the rain will come or not. There is considerable joy among peasants when the rain does begin. Besides, the farmers

1. Cited in Dillion, op. cit., p. 195.

have to worry about various local problems related to agriculture. Although they work hard in the fields, they can never be sure that they will be able to benefit from their labour. Throughout the year they worry about natural disasters. At the end of the spring and in the early autumn the harvest is at risk of being spoiled by the garmij and meh - two local winds which come respectively from the West and the East bringing jak - a kind of plant disease which ruins the whole harvest. Between spring and summer there is the possibility of the arrival of rain and hail which is liable to be very damaging to the crops. No proper manure is used by farmers. Sometimes the burnt animal dung which is used as fuel is used as fertilizer, or sheep and goats are allowed to graze on stubble with a view to their fertilizing the land with their droppings, or very often household sewage mixed with earth is used as manure.

In early September, the wheat and other grains are harvested together. Reaping, threshing and winnowing are all done by hand. A sickle - orax - is used to cut the grain which is then transferred by donkey to the threshing area - xarman - just north of the houses. The grain is collected there in heaps ready for threshing and winnowing. A wooden threshing machine drawn by two oxen is used for threshing. It is driven round and round the heap, until the unthreshed grain strewn in the path of the machine is ground into small pieces. The threshed grain is then winnowed by tossing it in the wind with an iron-pronged fork - šana, after which the heaps of grain which have been separated from the straw by this process are passed through a coarse sieve. This sieve, in its turn separates from the grain the heads from which the grain has been removed. These processes are very time-consuming and this time of year - from late September to the middle of December is a very hard, tiring and busy period for the farmers. Harvesting employs a considerable number of hands. All the available men of the village are at work in the fields. Boys as young as six



or seven may help and landless villagers are hired as Imaji - 'helpers' and are paid in kind. Relatives, friends and close neighbours, who may own smaller plots of lands and thus have lighter fieldwork, go as Imaji to cooperate with each other in the field. This sort of Imaji is not paid, but is given a complete meal, usually broth or rice with curry. When harvesting is over, and if the crop yield has been high that is, if no natural disasters have ruined the crops and if the harvest has been successfully gathered home, farmers invite all their friends and relatives to share samān śorbāsi - 'straw broth' with them. That day is the most festive day of the year for the villagers. After the harvest of wheat and grain and the planting of winter wheat in another piece of land (left fallow earlier in the year), there is a lull in the field labour until April. Weddings are usually held after the harvest in the belief that this time of the year is bolīx - 'blessed'-and ripe with provisions, and therefore auspicious for marriage. "Whoever marries after harvest, will lead a charmed life and will never be short of money in his life", is a saying often quoted by the villagers.

Of course, the farmers have to accompany the raising of grain crops with animal husbandry which supplements their insufficient incomes from the harvest of crops. Cattle are of utmost importance for the villagers. Apart from the fact that they need cattle for the plough and their droppings for fuel and fertilizer, cattle give them milk from which they make yoghurt, āyrān - 'buttermilk' - and butter which are part of the villagers' daily diet. Surplus dairy goods are exchanged in the bazaar for sugar, tea, oil and other consumer goods. When the cows are in calf, and not supplying milk, the peasants suffer considerably since they cannot afford to buy meat, vegetables and other needed foodstuffs every day. A household whose cow's milk is dried up because of pregnancy or for some other reason, is called yāvān - 'empty, dry' meaning that its members are ashamed that their visitors and that they themselves need



to borrow milk and other dairy products from close neighbours and relatives. A lactating cow is referred to as 'wet' - *yāgli* - and its owners feel at ease. The birth of calves brings great rejoicing for the family and the death of a cow causes great sorrow and villagers offer condolences.

In any case, a peasant in order to augment the income which he obtains from agriculture and which in many cases is insufficient to support him and his family, has to add animal husbandry to crop farming. In winter time and the first months of spring, the cattle remain in the village in the household cattle stalls. Each household owns winter fodder stock called *Tāyā* which is laid in during autumn and is used in winter when the animals are kept at home. In winter time it is usual for older men who have no fieldwork to take care of the animals. Four times a day, animals are fed and watered, and their stalls are cleaned. All the droppings are cleared out and the floor is freshly spread with dried dung. In the summertime, when the older men are busy in the fields, and the school terms are over, the younger men normally take up the responsibility of looking after the animals, herding them out of doors from before dawn until late evening.<sup>1</sup> The younger shepherds, often ranging from under ten to fourteen carry their own food and drink to the pasture. Very often the skin of their faces and hands peel off because of the long hours of staying outside exposed to hot weather and burning sun. In the spring and autumn the younger male members of each household are busy in school and the older ones work in the fields, and in order to make the best possible use of the labour force, the village people have planned a special system of herding. The total flocks of the village are divided into three sections, each of which contains the animals of 30-35 families. Every day

1. The pasture round the village, distinct from the cultivated lands, belong in common to the villagers, each person having a share commensurate with his share of the cultivated land. The landless people have no pasture rights and they have to hire pasture land from the landowners.



each section is looked after by one man who takes over the job when his turn comes. Alternatively several families sometimes combine to employ a shepherd, usually from among the landless people. Every month he is paid twelve pence per animal entrusted to him, including permission to milk the animals once a week and in kind he is paid 118 kg wheat and barley at harvest time. In short, although as a result of the land reform, the farmers of Doniq, have become landowners, gaining confidence and independence, none of their agricultural difficulties have been solved. They do not have the slightest access to commercially produced manure, to tractors or to other necessary machines. They carry out agriculture under very primitive, labour-intensive and exhausting conditions, accompanying it with other means of income (animal husbandry) to supplement their insufficient income from the raising of crops.

### Political Impact

The land reform programme has brought with it profound changes in the political and social system of the village. Land distribution was more important and effective socially and ideologically than economically for the village people, for it demolished the power of the big landlord and freed the farmers especially the two tribes of Tāt and Xalaś (who had suffered most from pressure at the hands of the big landowner, his agents and their own fellow villagers - the Bay) from unlimited oppression. The villagers became confident that the big landowner would not be able to usurp their crops or transfer the newly sowed land to another villager in exchange for a small bribe. Villagers are now playing more active roles formally and informally in managing their affairs and those of the village. The power and authority of the arbāb, kad xudā and their agents have been transferred to two village councils - known as xāneye insāf - roughly translated as "House of Justice" and Anjuman-e Deh - a village committee whose members are chosen

by the villagers themselves, though some villagers claimed that all the members were from the wealthy and influential Bay clan and that none of the Tāt or Xalaš or landless and poor villagers had representation on the committee. The village committee has five members, one representative or chairman from the state, a deputy chairman representing the peasant who is the influential peasant proprietor, and three peasants who have been appointed by both sides. All the men of the village vote every three years for committee members. The council or anjuman-e Deh, is supposed to handle such matters as taxation, village improvement and development. The xāney-e insāf is composed of three members - chosen by secret ballot. The xāney-e insaf is given the power to arbitrate in court cases involving land and other property. Family disagreements and personal suits can also be handled by the xāney-e insāf, although family pride usually keeps such disputes inside the family, for settlement by the head of household or, in extreme cases, by the village elders (āq-saqqals) - someone usually trusted for his patient, wisdom and common sense. People pointed out to me that although the xāney-e insaf and Anjuman-e Deh deal with their problems with discrimination and support the more powerful claimants, on the whole the villagers prefer these new councils to the big landowner and kad xudā. The committees handle the less important disputes and problems and refer the major ones to a district court in Sarāb where the district administrative offices are located. Feuds and longstanding arguments may occur, usually over land boundaries, which are beyond the ability of the councils to solve. During my stay, a quarrel developed over a 'fuel store' boundary involving two close neighbours. The daughter-in-law of Hāji Salmān who was the neighbour of Hāji Mohammad Hūseyṇ set up her fuel store slightly within the boundary of her neighbour's property. Over this, a severe quarrel developed and a fight broke out involving all the menfolk of two tiras. The son of Hāji Mohammad Hūseyṇ attacked the son of Hāji Salman with a spade and hurt him badly. Seeing how seriously the young man had been in-

jured, Hāji Mohammad Hūseyn actually struck his own daughter-in-law who was seven months pregnant in order to make her have a miscarriage, pretending that his daughter-in-law had been injured by the son of Hāji Salmān in order to confuse the authority and bring them a lighter sentence. This subject was extremely complex and had to be referred to a nearby gendarmerie post being beyond the ability of the village councils to deal with.

Another political effect of the land reform is the improvement of the relationships between the tribes. Most of the Tāts and Xalaš who were previously rayyat - working on the land under the big landlords or peasant proprietors, have now become landowners benefitting from the social status and prestige attached to landownership. As the result of receiving land and of the recent economic boom in the village, the economic status in the community of the Tāt and Xalaš has so improved that they now seem to be economically more powerful than the Bay clan. One proof of the improved relationship of the tribes is their intermarriage. The census which I took on the subject of villagers' ages at marriage and of their status at birth indicates that the clans began to exchange brides among themselves approximately 20-25 years ago. As will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, the villagers now prefer to marry an insider of whatever class status rather than an outsider. An important criterion now in the marriage customs of the clans is the economic position of the other family rather than the birth status of the chosen marriage partner. Although the clans have now become interrelated and Bay folk no longer flog the Tāt and Xalaš for petty violations of etiquette such as not accompanying a Bay's name with the title of 'Bay'; and although Tāt and Xalaš go to and fro as they please through the quarter of the village belonging to the Bay, nevertheless, the signs and traces of the old times and of the hierarchical relationship are still obvious in this society. The Bay clan is still influential and powerful in the community. All important institutions of the



village are run by them. They have exclusive membership of the councils of the village through which they steer all the economic, social and political affairs of the village. The Bay organize and conduct all religious ceremonies. Whenever state officials or any other officials or dignitaries visit the village, they contact the Bay and are entertained by them. The social distance between the Bay and the Tāt and Xalaš is most clearly evident in the seating arrangements at xeir-u-šar - events connected with mourning or of celebration. In the guest houses or the mosque, the Tāt and Xalaš should not sit at the back or even the middle section. Their place should always be at the lower end of a room.

In fact, throughout the Middle East as most anthropologists report, the guest houses are "key institutions" and the seating arrangements in them are the most important means of discovering an individual's social rank. Salim (1962) reports of the Marsh Arabs of Iraq that in the reed houses of the clan chiefs and lineage headmen,

"Everyone who attends the guest house should sit in the place which corresponds to his social rank.. Social status is shown by the distance at which a tribesman sits from the place of honour... Every one knows the exact standing of everyone else and treats him accordingly... Quite often, when... a man insists on sitting in a lower place than his social status requires, those who fail to persuade him to sit in a higher place, may correct their false position by changing their own places and sitting in relation to him."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in Doniq, in the guest houses, the clans should choose and sit in the places proper to their social standing, otherwise they are ridiculed and explicitly asked to change to an appropriate place. The Doniq tradition of regard for inherited rank or 'birth status' is still crucial. For instance, when

1. S.M. Salim, Marsh Dwellers of the Euphrates Delta, (London, 1962), pp. 77-80.

a Bay enters a guest house, all Tāt and Xalaš irrespective of age should stand up as a sign of respect, greet the visitor and direct him to sit in a suitable place, whereas when a member of one of the others enters an assembly, even if he is older, all Bay behave indifferently towards him. This tradition applies only to the men of Doniq. Among the women of the village, their male relatives' economic positions and their own ages are the factors brought to bear upon prestige and ranking rather than their tribal status. In the guest houses, all younger women irrespective of whether they are members of Bay, Tāt or Xalaš tribes should respect the older ones by standing up, greeting them and showing them to their relevant places.<sup>1</sup>

Among the men of the community, if a Tāt or Xalaš speaks or expresses an idea about anything in a public assembly he is ridiculed and shouted at by Bays to "shut up", as if to say "How could a Tāt understand anything and be capable of expressing his point of view!" A Bay woman who has been married to a Tāt for 20 years said,

"Tāts are not human beings. They are like animals. They are always afraid of us. It is still true that when their children want to go to school via our street, they look around to try to avoid a meeting a Bay. I never consider them as human, and I always insult them, though my husband is a Tāt and I have been beaten up several times by him because of obvious insults I gave to Tāt in front of him."

1. A similar relationship has been reported by Nancy Tapper from a study of the women of Shahsevan in the North West of Āzarbāyjān (Iran). Tapper, writing about the sub-society of women among the Shahsevan and describing the women's situation in respect of their achieved and ascribed statuses, notes...

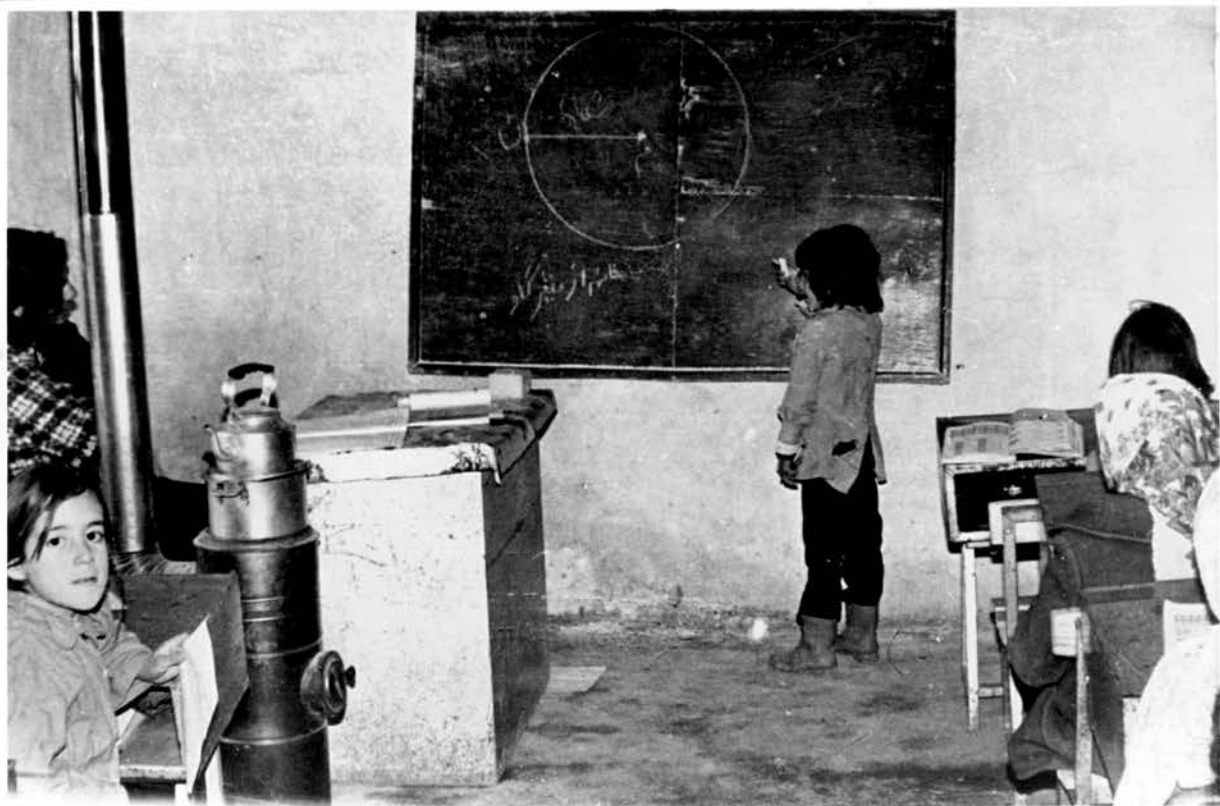
"The importance of a husband's position, the age of a woman, etc. are taken into consideration even on purely social occasions. This is most evident in the seating arrangements and etiquette in the guest-tent. Old women with no exceptional personal characteristics maximise their ascribed status (principally based on age) by taking a seat at the back of the tent and not moving from this place of honour throughout the feast..."

N. Tapper, "The role of women in selected pastoral Islamic societies", M.Phil thesis (London University, 1968), pp. 118-19. See also M. Dobkin: "Social Ranking in the Women's World of Purdah: A Turkish Example." in Anthropological Quarterly, 40 (1967) pp. 65-72.

Clearly, in numerous social relations, the people of the Tāt and Xalaš tribes are still considered inferior and low-grade, though their status has been improved considerably since the re-distribution of land. The Bay's justification for this attitude are still found in their reference to their own ancestors' status mentioned in previous pages. In addition, it is claimed by Bay clansmen that "they are by nature superior to other clans". Bay as they point out themselves are naturally qāllāš - 'extravagant', hospitable and sociable, whereas Tāt and Xalaš are by nature kasif - 'dirty', xasis - stingy and unsociable; they don't know how to hold a conversation or what to talk about and how to behave in front of a strange visitor. They stammer when they talk to people and are be-lāyqat - incapable and lacking in the finer qualities of character. Swear words are always at the tips of their tongues and are even directed at their own mothers and sisters. In short, the word Tāt is a synonym to a Bay for "inferior", "incapable" and "dirty". Beyond that, they believe that the ancestors of the Tāt once cut off one of the fingers of Imām Hüseyin to steal his valuable ring. This belief was reiterated by many of those with whom I talked and was cited as a proof of the inferiority of the Tāt. In reality it is not known how much truth it carries. Some of the characteristics believed by the Bay to belong to the other tribes seemed to have been accurately observed while others were probably imagined; certainly I could not detect them. The Tāt and Xalaš had no beliefs about the superior tribe, except that the latter's ancestors had plundered and violated others' rights and wealth and made themselves superior.

### Education

Another outcome of the land reform in Doniq has been the establishment of schools and a programme of education. The first elementary school was built in 1966 and was initially a mixed school for boys and girls. Later, in 1977, another school was organized for girls. The village now has two elementary schools



A classroom in the girls' school.  
Pupils of one grade are on the left and of another  
on the right.



of five grades and four teachers, two male and two female, who commute daily between Sarāb and the village. The boy's school was built in 1966 as a school which contains two rooms and a relatively big compound where almost seventy pupils study, but the girls' school is simply a room rented in one of the old houses. It is a mud-brick, windowless room which is divided into two parts, each being allocated to the pupils of two or three grades. In other words, the students of all grades (approximately 30) are gathered in one room and taught in turn.

### Carpet Weaving and Its Social and Economic Effects

Finally, an important change taken place in Doniq as a result of the land distribution is the development of the "carpet industry" which appears to have made major changes in the social and economic fabric of the community. As already noted, the general effect of land reform on the villagers of Doniq was social rather than economic - it undermined the authority of the big landlord and of the Bay tribe. However, while the villagers became independent landowners, the parcels of land distributed were generally not large enough to provide an adequate living income. These small pieces of land suffered from the same agricultural limitations as those that had faced farmers before land distribution - lack of water and primitive methods of working the land which have always been the major agricultural drawbacks and important factors in the economic conditions of the villagers of Iran.<sup>1</sup> Although after the land reform, the reduction in the sums transferred to absentee land owner, kad xudā, state officials and local administration meant a rise in the living and income standards of the villagers, the benefits were too slight to enable them to lift themselves out of the poverty described in earlier pages.

1. Lambton, (1953), op. cit., pp. 349-351.

Membership of agricultural cooperatives was a required precondition for receipt of land under the reform, and its duties were to replace the money lenders and big land owner by providing seed and manure and by marketing the agricultural produce and also by lending money to the peasants at a low interest rate. The cooperative was reported to be satisfactory in Doniq, though there are reports from other districts of Iran that the cooperative societies are no better than paper organisations, or that the conditions of those peasants who have not yet joined a society have become worse because credit is no longer available to them from the big landowners.<sup>1</sup> In addition, as Lambton has pointed out, cooperative societies would work well or badly, according to the way that local political winds were blowing. In Sirjān (in the West) the assistance of the Agricultural Bank fostered a healthy cooperative, while a disapproving Bank manager in Kirmān meant a sluggish start for the new cooperative. (In Kirmān, the cooperatives starved for capital until the Bank manager was replaced in 1964).<sup>2</sup>

In Doniq, as regards credit supply to the peasants, the cooperative society functioned well. Doniq itself has no cooperative society, but peasants have membership in the society in Ardahā - a neighbouring village. Three kinds of credit are supplied to the villagers from the cooperative and the Agricultural Bank - a short term (ten months) credit; an intermediate one (four years); and long term credit (10 years). The interest on money borrowed from the Agricultural Bank is 8% and 7% for capital on loan from the cooperative society, which is very low in comparison to the 50% or even 80% rate of interest charged by the old money lenders and landowners. People owning no land do not qualify for credit from the Agricultural Bank, because an important Bank rule is to extend credit only to those who own land. However, the landless peasant can benefit from the loans

1. Dillion, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

2. Lambton, (1969), pp. 307-8.

of the cooperative society, depending on the rate of his shares in the society. It is obvious that these credit-giving institutions have been of more assistance to the prosperous and large landowners than to the landless and small landowners. Most of the landless people of Doniq reported that the richer villagers who had the larger shares in the cooperative society were in the habit of borrowing money from the institution and lending to them (those without land assets) at higher rates of interest.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, credits supplied by the institutions were of great help in raising the peasants' living standard, but because their holdings were too small to live on, in most of cases, as it was reported, they were unable to repay the loans and thus had to borrow again from money lenders or sell their next crop in advance of the harvest to meet the instalments of the Bank loan, the cooperative society loan and mortgage on the land they had received. Often the peasants defaulted on their repayment of the institution's loans and payment for the land they had received and thus lost their lands to the prosperous families of the village and left for Tehran or other major cities. It was estimated that at least 40 families of this kind including the landless ones and the ones who left the village for other reasons, have gone from the village in recent years since the land distribution. Clearly the villagers needed an extra source of steady income to supplement their inadequate return from the land, and raise the standard of their living. In Doniq they decided to invest gradually in the carpet industry which was only slightly known hitherto.

In 1967-68 the Agricultural Bank had made credit available to more or less all landowning families for the express purpose of investing in carpet weaving. From then on carpet weaving began to contribute in large degree to family incomes (see chapter 6, p. 315). As the people themselves put it repeatedly carpet weaving saved them from utter poverty. "The village became alive because of it". It should be borne in mind that

once again landless people received no benefit from the loan programme. As a result they were either totally unable to join those who had set up looms or they were employed to weave on looms by city people or the prosperous people of the village. Julian Bharier points out aptly that,

"the development of credit facilities through the Agricultural Bank and the cooperative movement has enabled many farmers to release themselves from previous financial shackles, yet many are still constrained by former ties, by the fact that they have been basically unaffected by land reform, and by a lack of information."<sup>1</sup>

In any case, since the development of carpet weaving which is mainly performed by women and little girls in 90 per cent of households,<sup>2</sup> a higher standard of living has been brought into the village and major modifications have been made in the social and financial organization of the community. Carpet manufacture is now a vital supplementary regular income source. After the introduction of carpet manufacture, on which women have been working day and night, families have realized a higher standard of living. Villagers began adding to the size of their flocks and so stock raising became another supplementary source of income. Peasants have been very active building extra rooms onto their homes, allocating at least one separate room to each family in an extended family compound and a separate place for the animals which until recently have shared the room the family occupied. The activity, moreover, has not been confined entirely to housing; there has also been a united effort by the community to provide public utilities such as wells and roads, all these being clear indications of the improvement in the social and economic conditions of the village. In 1975, in the hope that they would be able to repay the funds borrowed from the credit-giving institutions, the villagers of Doniq obtained jointly about 500,000 Tomān (£31,250)

1. J. Bharier, Economic Development in Iran 1900-1970, (London, 1971), p. 272.

2. I will refer to the organization of carpet weaving in more detail in later chapter.



in credit from the Agricultural Bank and arranged for the digging of three artesian wells, of which one did not work well, though it cost a considerable sum of money. Fortunately the other two wells produced a good flow of water and have been of immense importance to the agriculture. Again, in 1977 the people raised an amount of about 60,000 Tomāns (£3,750) from contributions by each family and constructed a dirt bus-road to connect the village to the town. This road has also been of vital importance to the villagers. Although the people have become hugely indebted to the Agricultural Bank and cooperative society, they do not have to worry about being unable to meet the repayment claims and having to forfeit their possessions. The men are assured that their wives and daughters will supply them, unconditionally with four to eight carpets (see chapter 6 ) by the end of the year which would be enough to repay the instalments.

Since the construction of the road which has made contact with the town much easier, landless villagers and people who own small plots of land have been working in the town of Sarāb as casual construction labourers, commuting from the village daily. After the improvement of the road, and the operation of a coach which runs a connecting service to the town, most of the people who had been working in the major cities came back, preferring to work in Sarāb because of the convenience of being close to their families and of not having to pay for the extra housing and food expenses they had to meet when they lived far from their families. At present, during working seasons - two months of the spring and three months of the summer, there are forty-five peasants who work as building labourers in Sarāb - leaving home before dawn and coming back in late evening. Fifteen others work in Tehran in relatives' workshops, or in factories or as construction labourers. Most of the people working in Tehran are unmarried people who stay there for the whole year and visit the village and their parents once or twice a year; a few who are married and have

families, visit the village more often. In general, the position of people who work in the nearby town and commute to the village everyday is better than the situation of those who work in the big cities a long way off. The men who commute to Sarāb do not have to pay for additional housing and food. They carry their mid-day meals with them and come back to the village after work. In this way, they manage to bring home more of what they earn than the others do. They pay about five Tomān (40 pence) for the daily bus journey and save at least 45 or 50 Tomān (£3) out of 60 Tomān (£3.75) which is their total daily pay. The situation is different for workers who work in distant cities. They have to pay at least half of what they earn for lodging, for the food they have to eat away from home and for travel expenses when they visit their families in the village. The families of these people reported that they do not try to rent a room or a house since the housing situation in Tehran is very crowded and lodgings are expensive. If they have relatives living in Tehran, they stay with them; otherwise they either sleep at their places of work, if there is such a possibility, or they sleep in the streets. Besides this, the men live on a diet of dry bread in order to be able to send some money to their families in the village. It should be noted here that all over Iran the majority construction labourers in the cities are of rural origin. Some oil states such as Saudi Arabia and Libya suffer from an overall shortage of labour, and construction labourers have been encouraged to migrate from neighbouring peasant countries, but in Iran the construction workers have been brought in from the Iranian countryside itself. Writing of the status of these country people who have become construction workers in Iran, Fred Halliday (1979) makes it clear that

"construction is par excellence an area of underprivileged manual wage-earning employment... and employment is often a casual and seasonal nature. The working class in this sector is therefore of a less stable kind, either in economic or political sit-

"uation, often retains stronger ties with the villages from which they come... Employment in construction has risen from 336,000 in 1956 to over 900,000 in 1977, so that it now represents close on 10 per cent of the labour force... within the construction labour force it is possible to identify an upper stratum of skilled workers - plumbers, electricians... whose wages have risen spectacularly in the mid 1970s boom... The majority of workers of workers in construction do not, however, fall into this category. Unskilled workers in this sector are probably exposed to a considerable extent to the double oppression of low wages and insecure employment... The wages of these workers, averaged out over a year, may be as low or lower than those in the less favoured sector of manufacturing employment, and the conditions under which they live, give their non-permanent presence in the city, may also be worse..."<sup>1</sup>

Although the women of Doniq knew very little about the living conditions and the wages of their menfolk who worked at casual construction jobs in the cities, such scanty information as they had - about how the men slept in the streets or subsisted mainly on bread, seemed to be in keeping with the general description given by Halliday of the life of construction workers in Iran. Another important point is that when the men leave the village to work in the cities, all domestic responsibilities, ranging from taking care of animals (feeding and watering them three times a day) to dealing with the children, carrying out some errands outside the home and doing the housework, besides carpet weaving all fall on the women who often complain about the burden. Nevertheless, they seemed to enjoy the absence of menfolk since this left them free to make their own decisions about household matters and affairs concerning the children. Sometimes they enjoyed cooking whatever they fancied or they might invite their friends to visit them, or drop in on neighbours and close friends whenever they had time. In the final analysis, although the construction labourers are unskilled, earning very low wages and enduring difficult condit-

1. Halliday, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-84.

ions after leaving the village for the distant cities, and although the work to be done by their womenfolk is multiplied, nevertheless their wages do form a vital contribution to their families' incomes and are, in fact, another valuable supplementary source of income which has been channelled into the village since the land distribution and consequent economic development and since the introduction of carpet weaving and the construction of the road.

The road has brought the village people within easier and more frequent reach of the nearby town which is, in turn, of considerable importance to their economic and social conditions. They now have a convenient means of taking their surplus goods such as handicrafts, chickens, eggs, and butter to market where they can exchange or barter them at current prices. In addition to easy access to the market, to the city doctor and other urban privileges, frequent contact with the city has had an important effect on the villagers' outlook. They have felt the impact of new ideas coming from the city, and their consciousness about politics, current affairs and the modern way of life has altered. They are regularly aware of what happens throughout the country, through being in touch with city people, although they are still illiterate and so cannot read newspapers or take much advantage of the mass media. Sometimes they listen to the Turkish programme on the radio which was introduced to the villagers for the first time ten years ago by a man who had been working in Tehran. Villagers told me that when this man brought a small radio to the village, all the villagers, irrespective of age hurried to watch it surprised at how a piece of metal could actually talk, sing and give the news! Every household now has a radio and some also have a tape recorder. Recently a peasant bought a television and the villagers made a big effort to make it work with a battery, but did not succeed.

Recent changes have also brought two shops to Doniq and these



have put people within easy reach of consumer goods and staple items such as tea, sugar, salt, matches and occasionally fruits and seasonal vegetables like pomegranates, cabbages, tomatoes, melons and cucumbers, which people used to have to travel twenty kilometers to buy in the city shops or, as informants recalled, to rustle up, by asking favours at every house in the village, when guests arrived unexpectedly. In short, the introduction of carpet production, which is now a crucial means of livelihood for Doniq people, has brought dramatic changes in the social and financial systems of the village. It has introduced new amenities to the village - wells, a road, shops and other advantages.

However, it is important to examine what effects and influence these modifications have had on the position of women who have played major roles in the restructuring of village life by supplying the main labour force of the carpet industry. When one enters the village, one cannot avoid noticing the road, the school and the shops - very important and attractive, but simply the public and visible effects of the land reform and carpet industry. One must also examine the invisible effects of these developments and find out what changes have taken place inside the households.

In the following chapter, the women of Doniq are placed in a wider context in order to examine the determinants of women's status and especially to consider the importance of women's economic activities in relation to their social status.

## CHAPTER 2

### ISLAM AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

Women in Doniq, like many of their counterparts in most Muslim and many non-Muslim societies, lack control over most aspects of their social and family life. Their marriages are arranged by guardians, they are always veiled when they leave their homes; they have to behave modestly - avoiding the exchange of so much as a word with a strange man; they must cast their heads and eyes downwards when they are outside the home and must be seen only rarely and they must keep a physical distance from the public society of men in order to protect the honour of their families. Of course, these features of their seclusion are not unique to women in Doniq or Iran. There are anthropological reports which testify to the persistence of these restrictions for women all over the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent and the Mediterranean, but with varying degrees of strictness and subject to alteration according to context.

In this chapter I shall attempt to place the position of women in Doniq in a general context. One of the forces which is very often presented as responsible for the seclusion of women in Muslim communities is 'Islam'. Therefore, I shall first concentrate on whether the people of Doniq, as a Muslim community have a genuine belief in Islam and direct their day-to-day activities in accordance with Islamic values and teachings. In other words I shall ask, "which aspects of their lives are governed by Islam and which are not?"; secondly I shall examine the Doniq villagers' views about the status of women, to find out whether they also base these principles purely on the teachings of Islam or recognize other traditional 'rules' for women in their society; finally I shall consider general perspectives

and forces which have led to the seclusion of women in many cultures and communities.

### Islam

Islam with its origins in the seventh century A.D., is the dominant religion of the Middle East. The word Islam means submission or "submitting oneself or one's person to God".<sup>1</sup> The adherent of Islam is called a Muslim, or in Persian Mosalmān. Persia is predominantly Muslim, but belongs to the Shi'a branch which first began as a political and social revolt in the century after the death of Mohammad and later became religious in nature. Early in the sixteenth century, the Safavid dynasty of Iran, supported by Turkish tribes from Āzarbāyjān, revived the Shi'a sect and adopted its doctrines as the official religion of Iran, a position which it retains to this time.<sup>2</sup>

All sects and factions of Islam have a united belief in Mohammad as prophet and messenger of God and in the Quran as a holy book - God's word revealed directly to Mohammad. These inspired words presumably memorized by his adherents during the prophet's lifetime, were put into written form after his death. A later book of hadith, or traditional sayings, setting out rules for living as dictated by Mohammad, was compiled after the prophet's death. These two documents with the addition of the shari'ah (based on the Quran) form the fundamental rule of law which dominates the life of a believing Muslim.

Every Shi'a Muslim believes in the pillars of Shi'ite religion - arkaneddin - which are comprised of two principal groups of duties, called ferueddin - "the branches of duty" - and usuleddin - "the Roots of duty". The ferueddin consist of ten

1. H.A.R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, (Oxford, 1953), p. 1.

2. Ibid, p. 18.

obligatory duties for every mosalmān of which the following five are the most important: 1. Namāz or prayer and avoidance of pollution; 2 - oruj or fasting during Ramazan; 3 - xums or gift made when occasional increments are added to a person's capital; 4 - zakāt or gifts made from regular increase to a person's capital; 5 - hajj or the pilgrimage to Mecca.

This is what every mosalmān has to practise. What he has to believe in is fixed in the group of theological duties consisting of 1 - Towhid, or belief in Divine unity (that there is no God but Allāh); 2 - Nabbuvat or prophecy; 3 - Ma<sup>c</sup>ād, or the Resurrection; 4 - Adl, or the Divine justice; 5 - Imāmat or belief in the Imams as successors of the prophet. One of the fundamental disagreements of the Shi'a sect with the Sunni and other sects of Islam centres around belief number 5 - the succession of the prophet. The Shi'a theologians have always considered that the leader after the prophet, ought to descend from the prophet's own family, whereas the Sunni confessors have refused to accept this stipulation. Therefore, the lawful successors of the prophet are different persons according to the Sunni and the Shi'a sects. For the Shi'a sect, Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet, who was duly elected as fourth caliph or successor of the prophet, is accepted as the first successor, ignoring the first three caliphs - Abubakr, Omar and Osmān in the belief that the successor should be of the prophet's own family. Whereas Ali is regarded as the fourth caliph by the Sunni sect.

Furthermore, the Shi'ite muslims restrict the successors to an ultimate number of twelve, while the Sunni maintain that there is an infinite line of successors. Another dimension in which Sunni doctrine differs from the Shi'a's is the question of ijmā - the consensus of opinion. It is argued that after the death of Mohammad, many questions arose which were not covered clearly and systematically in the Quran and Traditions. To overcome this difficulty, the Sunni sect relied on the opinion



and consensus of the community. However the Shi'ites could not accept the doctrine of community interpretation of the sacred writings, and took hold, instead, of the belief that God had put the guidance of the faithful into the care of infallible Imams, one of whom would be present in every era. Shi'ites taught that all the Imams must be respected as appointed by God and as having inherited secret wisdom from their predecessors. The Quran could be interpreted only by the infallible Imams. In fact, as long as the Imams were living in the community, the position was clear, but after the disappearance of the twelfth Imam in 260/873-4 difficulties arose. Although there was no longer Ijmā, people relied on fatvās - decisions given through the ages by the Ulamā - the 'learned' or the 'doctors' in religious knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

As already mentioned, all aspects of the life of Middle East people are directed by religion. Patai writes,

"Religion is the fundamental motivating force in most phases and aspects of culture, and is in evidence in practically every act and moment of existence."<sup>2</sup>

Frye notes that religion to Persian people means much more than just theology.

"It is traditionally their society, their law and culture, as well as their systems of ethics and behaviour."<sup>3</sup>

1. Shi'ite beliefs, prescriptions and practices have been discussed in detail in numerous works, therefore there is no need to give a complete account of them here. For further details see, Gibb, especially pp.94-98 and chapter 7; D.M. Donaldson, The Shi'ite Religion, A History of Islam in Persia and Iraq, (London, 1933); and M.H. Tabataba'i, Shi'ite Islam, translated and edited by Sayyed Hossein Nasr (London, 1975), pp.3-27.

2. Cited in K. Kendall, Personality Development In An Iranian Village: An Analysis of Socialization Practices and the Development of the Women's Role, (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Washington, 1968), p. 52.

3. Ibid.

Because they are "Twelver" Shi'ite Muslims, Doniq people are led by Islamic prescription in almost all the actions of their lives, though in some activities they show unorthodoxies which result from their own illiteracy and from the lack of qualification of the village mullā in religious matters. And of course people are sometimes lax in their observance of religious precepts, even if they are knowledgeable enough. Meanwhile the village customs - Rasm or Sūnnat and the civil law - qānun play a big part in the villagers' lives.

As regards Islam's regulations about principles of living, and its moral guidance, the village people are aware that they are sometimes lax in their response. They regret this but claim that in most cases they themselves are not guilty. Their illiteracy and lack of knowledge of Arabic make it impossible to have direct access to the Quran and religious teachings. They have to appeal to intermediaries to explain the Quran and its regulations to them. There are approximately seven or eight men, as noted earlier, who were taught by the village mullā some time ago how to read the Quran. They read the Quran only at funerals and for merit without understanding the meaning. Every household possesses a copy of the Quran which is wrapped in a piece of cloth and kept on a shelf out of reach, sometimes not being touched for many years. Possessing a copy of the Quran is believed to bring blessing to a family even if it is not read. People are afraid to touch it:

"It is a sacred thing which should be touched with clean hands, after the performance of ablutions - qusl - and clean heart. Otherwise an evil spirit will take hold of the sinner, bringing life-destroying bad-luck - tutār."

Most of the people have been taught religious knowledge by an urban mullā (religious leader) who is invited to the village to conduct ceremonies specifically during religious months - Moharram, Ramazān - and at funerals. The mullā stays in the village

for ten days during Moharram and almost a month in Ramazān, receiving all his needs from the villagers (food and lodgings), and also receiving 6,000 Tomān (£375.00) for each occasion. During Moharram and Ramazān, he gives sermons in the mosque and houses on the recommendations of Islam, and Quranic regulations and spends most time recounting the historical background - the war of Karbalā, the fight of Hüseyn (the third Shi'ite Imam) with Yazid, and his martyrdom. During the day people gather in the mosque to receive instruction from the mullā and in the evening, until midnight, the village men gather in the household where it is the mullā's turn to lodge, to ask various questions about different fields of Islamic law to set their minds at rest about them. Though the village men have more contact with the mullā than the women and as a result learn more about the religious duties and precepts, the same knowledge is passed on by the men to the women. The mullā has made people more or less aware of religious duties and recommendations - teaching them about God and his power, about the prophet, the Imams, the Quran, and the angels, duties at Ramazān and about namāz (prayer), prohibition of sexual activity during Ramazān, bodily pollution and ablutions (qusl), reading the Quran at funerals, performing marsiya (mourning at Moharram) and about giving alms. He has also given instruction on Qiyāmat gūni (the day of judgement), savāb (meritorious acts) and gūnāh (sinful acts) and corresponding rewards and punishments in the other worlds - behešt (heaven) and jahannam (hell). Although they may be illiterate, the people know that the God has sent a vast number of pey-gambar - prophets (124,000) into the world, the first of whom is Adam and the last the prophet Mohammed. As Shi'as, they count the number of their twelve Imams - the successors of pey-gambar, the first of whom is Ali and believe that the twelfth is hidden and will appear when the world becomes full of corruption and kāfar - those who do not believe in Islam. They see religious morality in terms of savāb (meritorious acts) and gūnāh (sinful act) and believe in Qiyāmat gūni - the Day

of Judgement, when all the savābs and gūnāhs of every Muslim will be weighed and two angels known as sāğduš and solduš will ask for the reasons if one's deeds have not been in accordance with Islam. If he observes and performs all the religious laws and recommendations properly, if he has been pious, the musalmān will go to heaven, otherwise his place is Jahannam (hell) which is filled with fire, devils, snakes and other monstrous things and where burning alive will be the last punishment after a multitude of tortures and sufferings.

In regard to obligatory duties of Islam (ferueddin), the people practise most of these according to the formal laws of Islam. In Shi'ism, Namāz - prayer - one of the important elements of the foundation principles is merely an individual duty: to pray communally, particularly on Friday in other forms of the Islamic religion is not obligatory in Shi'ite Islam,<sup>1</sup> therefore the villagers do not observe Friday as a day for prayers and a sermon. During Moharram, Ramazān and at certain other times which are the periods of intense religious activity, all adults (males over 15 and females over 9) pray regularly. On normal days of the year, only elderly people, especially the ones who have made the pilgrimage to Mašad, Mecca or Karbala, pray. People believe that Namāz is obligatory for every adult musalmān and they have been taught by the mullā that it is the responsibility of parents to teach or make their adult children pray three times a day, otherwise they will be punished in another world, but the villagers told me that, in the village, if one forces a youth to pray, he certainly commits more sinful acts than meritorious ones. Young people regularly have bodily discharges whether or not they take part in sexual activity and there is no hāmām (public bath) to which they can go to perform qusl - ceremonial washing. Since it is impossible for them to heat water and wash themselves thoroughly at home

1. B.J. Spooner, "The Function of Religion in Persian Society", in Iran, I (1963), pp. 83-95.



with the other members of the family about, because they are shy and would be embarrassed if discovered bathing, they can not be forced to stand facing the qibla (Mecca). That would be a sinful act if carried out while 'unclean'.

During Ramazān, the villagers believe in fasting regularly and strictly. Even pregnant and lactating women who, according to Islamic prescription, should postpone the fast until another time,<sup>1</sup> fast during Ramazān, though they risk their own lives and that of their infants. Some women reported that they had had miscarriages during the fasting month, but that they had to fast, because the village mullā had taught them that Islam recommends that anyone who has the strength to pick up a cup should fast, even if she is pregnant, nurses a child or is old. Only sick people may postpone the fast to some other time. Frequently girls of nine years of age (which is the recommended age for a female to start fasting), became unconscious from hunger, but their mothers usually claim that this has more merit in it than ordinary fasting and brings greater rewards from God. Sometimes parents bribe their children under the recognized age for fasting. The parents use this sort of fast to make up the fast of their dead relatives who might not have been able to complete their lost fasts. At the end of the fasting month, people celebrate the feast of Fitr; all friends and relatives visit each other offering congratulation, sweets, other special foods and each family give some money to the poor as alms. Usually the mullā collects all the Fitra alms promising the people that he will distribute it among the poor, the widows and orphans.

The village people recognise the need to pay xums and zakāt - the 'religious alm tax'. Usually the rich people of the village give a list of their property - houses, livestock, golden

1. V.R. Bevan Jones, Women in Islam, (Lucknow, 1941), pp. 294-95.

ornaments, money in the bank and other valuable possessions to the mullā who assesses the value of the property and calculates an appropriate levy. The levy is delivered to Feyzziyya Madrasasina - the centre of religious studies in Persia, in Qum (established in 1906 A.D.) either through the village mullā or the people themselves, to be spent for religious purposes or distributed among the poor. People believe that giving out the religious alms tax makes one's property pāk (purified and blessed) which always keeps a family under the protection of God. In addition to zakāt people of the village pay something each year in the name of the Imams - 'māl-e Imām'. This is generally paid in accordance with the village mullā's teaching. Each musalmān, irrespective of whether he is prosperous or otherwise has an obligation to pay annually some amount of money in the name of Imams. This money should normally be sent to cover the expenses of the Imams' servants. The mullā weighs the economic position of all the village families with the help of local people and specifies their māl-e Imām. After collecting the Māl-e Imām, the mullā gives receipts to the people, certifying that they have paid, for instance, this year's Imam's share. If a poor family is not able to pay its share, a prosperous one pays instead because of the attached merit. It is believed that the mullā is entitled to keep some of the māl-e Imām for himself, but he should deliver the greater part of it to the headquarters in Qum to be spent by theological students. However villagers complained that the mullā of the village keeps most of the māl-e Imām for himself and that he has built a mansion for himself in Qum.

The last element of the "pillars" of the religion is hajj, or pilgrimage, which is expected of each one who can afford it. This duty is obligatory for women also and if they have an opportunity they should go. The village people believe that the pilgrimage to Mecca is a part of one's gesmat (fate). If God loves one, he makes him wealthy enough to visit his house. There are four male Hājis (Mecca pilgrims) in the village but

none among the women. The pilgrimage to Mecca transforms one's social and political status within the community. Returned pilgrims are highly respected, are consulted on xeir-u-sar - good and bad events - and mediate in disputes. There are only two Doniq women who have made the pilgrimage to Karbalā. One of these women made the pilgrimage using an inheritance from her father and the other went with her husband. In fact, the social status of Kāblāy Xānim is not less than that of Hājjis among men. At least among their kinswomen, they are consulted about most of family affairs and their advice carries equal weight with that of men. In the guest houses, they are allocated the upper part of the room and respected highly. The village people cannot normally afford the pilgrimage to Mecca, though they always wish that they could afford it. Instead they know it is their obligation to "visit" (ziyārat) the shrine of Imam Rezā (the eighth Imam of Shi'a) at Mashad which is nearer to Doniq and does not require so much money to go to. Each year on the tenth of Safar (the second month of Mohammadean year), which is the anniversary of Imam Hüs-eyn's martyrdom - arba'in - a group of village mourners - heybat - go to Mashad to mourn Hüs-eyn's martyrdom there. This is a good opportunity for village people to join the heybat and fulfil their obligation. The villagers, like other Muslims, recognise qurbān bāy rāmi - the final major rite of the pilgrimage of Mecca on the 10th of Dhul-Hijja, when animals are sacrificed at Mina in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice in place of his son - Ishmael.<sup>1</sup> The family who can afford to do so sacrifices a sheep and distributes it to relatives, and to others who are not related to them, usually the poor who cannot afford to sacrifice an animal. The ones who cannot afford to sacrifice an animal, may join together and share a sheep among themselves.

Finally, one of the marked and important religious rites and

1. Quran, 23:101.

festivals which is highly respected and recognized among Doniq people (just as it is in rural and urban communities throughout the whole Shi'ite world), is Moharram - the month of mourning. The anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Huseyn on the 10th of Moharram is the most important religious event of the year for the villagers. The historical battle of Karbalā (A.D. 680) when Huseyn (the third Imam) with a small number of supporters, fought against the Caliph Yazid for the rulership of Islam and was slain, is the event commemorated during the mourning month. The battle of Karbalā and the martyrdom of Huseyn combine to form the most afflicting historical tragedy for Shi'a mosalmāns. Public mourning during the ten days of Moharram was first introduced by Buyid ruler in 963 A.D. (352 A.H.) and

"the practice has continued as the most distinctive and most widely known of all Shi'ite customs."<sup>1</sup>

"The over-riding religious importance of Moharram in the mind of the ordinary believer is proved again and again by the intensity with which it is observed from year to year despite official attempts to restrain it."<sup>2</sup>

As authors report from different Shi'ite societies, the way mourning takes place during ten days of Moharram differs from one area to another. Some communities dramatize the martyrdom while others concentrate on various other forms of mourning the commonest of which is

"a great variety of spectacular and gruesome ways

1. See Donaldson, op. cit., pp. 30-31; M. Arzrumi, Tārix-e Engelāb-e Islam Beynol Xāss Val'āmm. MS. (National Library of Tehran, 1634), pp. 602-4; E.G. Browne, A History of Persian Literature in Modern Times (A.D. 1500-1924), (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 30-31; and N. Falsafi, Zendeqāni-ye Šāh Abbās Avval (Tehran, 1303 SH.) Vol. 3, p. 10.

2. Spooner, op. cit., p. 51.



"of shedding their blood and mutilating their bodies."<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, people do not mutilate their bodies any more, though they used to wound their heads a few years ago until the state banned the practice. Approximately five years ago, on the tenth day of Moharram (Āšurā) people used to wear the Kafan - a white cloth - and prick their heads with a dagger, processing around the village lanes. My informants reported that Doniq's bāšyārānnār - 'head cutters' - went to neighbouring villages pricking themselves with a dagger in front of the mosque of each village until they became unconscious and collapsed. The village people no longer perform the mutilation ceremony, but nevertheless the mourning and rites are highly emotional in Doniq. The Moharram anniversary and processions in the village, as in other communities, are detailed and numerous and do not warrant detailed description here. Most important processions can be described as examples. In the six days of Moharram, all the village men form a dasta - 'mourning team'. They wrap black scarves around their heads and wear long black smocks. They beat themselves with chains - zanjir twice a day for one or two hours. They move in slow processions through the lanes of the village while beating themselves and calling out nowha (laments) in which they are led by a man who chants from a printed book of nowha. After wandering the lanes and visiting some houses where they distribute specially blessed food, they gather in the mosque making the ceremony more impressive and dramatic by marsiya (a lament in verse) on the tragedy of Karbala.<sup>2</sup> The nowha oxiyān - 'reciter' - or

1. Donaldson, op.cit., p.277; I. Lassy, Muharram Mysteries among the Azerbaijan Turks of Caucasia, (Helsingfors, 1916), see particularly, pp. 13-23 and R. Tapper, op.cit., pp. 159-162. A detailed study of the religion of the Āzarbāyjāni Turks was made by Lassy in villages near Bāku and by Tapper among the Shahsevan of Northern Iran. The features of the religious practices of these people appear similar in many ways to those I recorded among the people of Doniq.

2. The marsiya can be described as "an intoned exposition or interpretation, by one practised in the art, of the general faith, of which the climax and major part will be concerned with the passion and death of Husain, or some related aspect of the Moharram story." Spooner, op.cit., p. 86.

the village mullā chants nowha or marsiya to arouse the emotions of people gathered in the mosque - women in one separate part and men in another part, who will beat their chests and heads and weep in sympathy. There is no specific assembly for mourning among the village women, although the city women hold a mourning assembly separate from the men. The village women gather in the mosque only in Tāsu'ā and Āšurā when it seems to be obligatory for all people irrespective of sex, young and old, to be in the mosque. They listen to laments chanted in the men's part and weep. To me the village women do not appear to be as emotional or as concerned about mourning as the men, or as city women. While the rite is going on in the men's section and the atmosphere is highly emotional, many women are to be found chatting and exchanging the news of the village, or carefully watching the behaviour of young marriageable girls in order to mark one or two as possible matches for their male relatives. In fact, they seem to take advantage of their free time and this leisure activity to enjoy themselves, chatting and eating rather than

"rehearsing their faith and deepening their sympathy with Husain and his companions in their suffering",<sup>1</sup>

which devotional exercises should be performed by every Shi'a to gain a savāb, that is, to become eligible for a spiritual reward in heaven. In any case, the 'dasta', zanjirvirān - beating with chains, gathering in the mosque and chanting of laments go on until the tenth day of Moharram - Āšurā - when the "passion plays" known locally as šabih (resemblances or imitations) take place. A re-enactment of the Battle of Karbalā and the fight of Hūseyn with Yazid is demonstrated and people watch the play and sob.

1. Spooner, op.cit., p. 86.

In short, all the elements of the Shi'ite faith with its duties, rituals and festivals, are believed and practised by the village community according to orthodox Islam; and when the villagers are sometimes lax in carrying out a particular rule, it is only because they are illiterate or have been misled by the badly informed mullā. This does not mean, however, that the people are habitually slipshod about their religious beliefs. The important events of their lives such as circumcision, marriage, death and mourning are acted out on a stage set by Islam. Until two years ago, marriages in Doniq though contracted according to Islamic law, were celebrated with music, dancing, gambling and drinking which are all against Islamic teachings. The mullā condemned them as harām - prohibited in Islam - asking people to stop celebrating the marriage ceremony with music and to make use of the darviš - dervish - who chants unorthodox stories from religious mythology. People complained that the marriage ceremony without music and with a darviš is not enjoyable at all, but since Islamic teaching (and the mullā in particular) do not approve of the more relaxed celebrations, the villagers must do without them.

#### Doniq women within a wider context

In regard to the position of women in family and society - their modesty, chastity and seclusion, the segregation of the sexes and veiling are all Islamic institutions, but although people of Doniq carry out the absolute terms of the religious prescriptions, they usually explain what they do as tradition (Rasm) or as responses to the two notions of 'honour' - ābiri - and 'shame' - šarm - rather than as obedience to Islam. In other words, when a woman is asked why she restricts her activities in society so rigidly, she answers that she wants to protect her ābiri - 'honour' - and that of her family. Or her seclusion is referred to as a 'custom' rather than a günāh - an Islamic requirement.

Just as Doniq women do not see Islam as solely responsible for their seclusion, anthropological studies have shown that among many other Muslim and non-Muslim communities the institution of 'pardah' or restriction has been imposed on women with justifications other than 'Islam'. But one of the most prevalent impressions among the people of many societies, especially in the West, is that the 'pardah system' and the seclusion of women originated in Islam, is purely an Islamic ideal and is practised among Muslim communities only. However to counter-balance this impression I should like to give here a brief general consideration of the position of women in Islam, then narrow the discussion to focus on the status and seclusion of women in Doniq as a Muslim community, and finally extend the inquiry to an examination of 'pardah' among the women of other cultures and the factors and forces presented as responsible for it. In this way we shall discover if seclusion of women can be considered a purely Islamic phenomenon or if the matter is more complex.

As a matter of fact, studying the position of women in Islam is not simple. For as it has been noted before, Islamic law has complex sources - in the Quran, Mohammad's sayings - hadith, his way of life - sunna and various other schools of thought all with opposing interpretations and ideas. Obviously, the different strands of thought present different values and beliefs in regard to the importance of the 'pardah system' or 'seclusion' and status of women. When one refers to the writings of the more liberal and reformist schools of thought which are extremely diffuse, with many variations of interpretation, one is confronted with the interpretation that all the verses in the Quran urging Mohammad's wives to practise 'purdah' relate only to the prophet's own wives and to women residing in places like Mecca and Medina and that the commands are not applicable to all believing women.<sup>1</sup> Some others claim that the

1. Bevan Jones, op.cit., p. 211.



Quran and Islamic teachings nowhere forbid the education of women, nowhere specify the strict observance of 'pardah' and that they do not forbid women to occupy themselves with business and social activities. Saneya Saleh, for instance, notes that,

"A Moslem woman is recognised as equal to a man in the matter of earning money and owning property. She may, if she wants to, follow any profession."

In support of her interpretation she cites verse 4:32 of the Quran that says,

"Men shall have the benefits of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn."<sup>1</sup>

For further support she points out that in the seventh century (at the inception of Islam)

"women took an interest in all the activities of the Moslem community. The care of the children did not prevent them from going to the mosque to join the prayers (a thing not done now)... to join the soldiers in the field of battle, to perform a large number of duties... or taking part in actual fighting when necessary... They were often consulted on religious and political matters ... helped their husbands in the fields, served the male guests at feasts and carried on their own business. They could sell to and purchase from men. As early as the seventh century a woman was appointed by the Caliph Umar as 'super intendent' of the market of Medina... Islam never favoured her seclusion in any 'extravagant form'... unfortunately for Moslem women... these socio-religious reforms designed for the seventh century have not furnished a basis for continuous progress and reform."<sup>2</sup>

1. S. Saleh, "Women in Islam: Their Status in Religious and Traditional Culture", International Journal of Sociology of the Family, 2 (1972), part one, pp.35-42 (p.37)

2. Ibid, part two, pp. 193-201 (p.194). Cf. H. Papanek, "Purdah: separate worlds and symbolic shelter", Comparative Studies in Society and History, 15 (1973), pp. 289-355 (p. 305).

Saleh concludes that it is absolutely misleading and incorrect to say that pardah is a religious institution established under the sanction of The Holy Quran. The fact is that the pardah and seclusion concept is quite foreign to Islam and Islam in this relation has in fact been corrupted by extra-Islamic traditions, civil law, non-Islamic custom and misinterpretation of men who have always been trying to take advantage of their power. Islam should, however, be purified not paralyzed by these non-Islamic traditions and values.

Besides those who subscribe to this liberal line of thought, believing that Islam has never recommended and does not now recommend the institution of pardah, there are other reformist experts who believe that 'pardah' has been in the spirit of Islam, but argue that Islam is not philosophically stagnant; its concepts leave room for changes in its social laws - in response to developing technology and to the needs of people. This flexibility is more easily recognized if we separate Islam's social laws from its theological teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this "apologetic progressive" claim, those belonging to the traditional, or orthodox school of Muslims see 'pardah' as an Islamic injunction, its observance demonstrating their adherence to the ideas of their religion. This school is believed to interpret 'the word' rather than 'the spirit' of the Quran, supporting the superiority of men, and the traditions of arranged marriage and polygamy while opposing birth control, the education of women, women's taking part in social and economic activities outside the home, and recommending strict 'pardah' and veiling. Outstanding examples of the proponents of this school are Mortaza Motahharri (writing in 1978), a prominent Persian theologian, Ahmad Galwash (1961) of Pakistan and Abul A'la Maududi; leader of the Islamic political party, Jamā'at-e Islami

1. H. Sadr, Huquq-e Zan Dar Islam Va Urupa, (Tehran, 1357 Sh.). See also D.C. Gordon, Women in Algeria: An Essay on Change (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), p. 29.

from India (1972).<sup>1</sup>

Maududi, who is concerned with the 'laws of nature' and the social system of Islam, says that those people who believe that Islam should be changed with time and with the changing interests of human beings or who believe that the seclusion of women is not in the spirit of Islam, "have developed the disease of taking a jaundiced view of things" or have been influenced by western values. He argues that the segregation of sexes and seclusion and veiling of women is what Revelation decreed in accordance with the reason and nature of human beings and with the social order and is intended for all eras and all believing women.<sup>2</sup>

Human intervention, suggests Maududi, will clumsily upset the fine balance of Islamic society, for which provision is made in the holy writings. He continues that human beings have been endowed with unlimited and uncontrollable sexual urge not merely for the purpose of enjoyment, pleasure and replenishing of the earth, but the creator also intended man and woman to unite as lifelong companions, fitted comfortably into the family, a protected and safe sphere within which children may be reared, and

"To knit several families together by the love of

1. M. Motahhari, Nezām-e Huquq-e Zan Dar Islam (Tehran, 1357 Sh.); A. Galwash, The Religion of Islam (Cairo, 1961), see especially pp. 115-52; and A.A.Maududi, Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam, translated and edited by Al-Ashari (Lahore, 1972).

2. As regards the controversial argument that the verses of the Quran in relation to the status of women apply only to the wives of the Prophet and are not for general application, Maududi believes that although the injunctions are revealed for the holy Prophet and his wives, they are intended to serve as a model for other women living in the houses of the ordinary Muslims. They are for the compliance of all Muslims who are followers of Mohammad and who should follow his way. (Maududi, op. cit., footnote, p. 151).

"blood relations, to lay the foundation for cooperation and mutual dealings by common loves, and finally to create a society and system of community life."<sup>1</sup>

Maududi feels that one of the most pressing needs of society is that runaway sexual desires must be carefully restrained or moral collapse will come about. Conditions in a community should not tempt people to sexual greed or excess, but should encourage natural fulfillment of sexual inclinations within the law. Maududi claims that the Islamic code of living provides for this pleasing balance, through the institution of marriage which is urged on all Muslims (those who do not marry incur the displeasure of Islam).<sup>2</sup>

In order to prevent sexual excitement and stimulation leading to the satisfaction of the sexual urge outside of marriage and to provide a pure and peaceful social harmony that is needed for man to develop his physical and mental abilities and play his role effectively in the building up of civilization, the social laws of Islam, Maududi reminds us, have drawn up three categories of measures: "moral purification", "punitive laws", and "preventive measures".<sup>3</sup> These three measures cooperate with each other to help the social system to function in an orderly and effective way. By the first process - 'self-purification' a man is so trained and educated that he automatically assumes modest and moral behaviour as "natural" and is therefore disinclined to violate it. If he fails to observe morality, the second process recommends a severe punishment. And finally "preventive measures" are suggested to safeguard against all sorts of unnatural "excitement" and "artificial stimulation" and maintain moral soundness within the society.

1. Maududi, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid, pp. 163-64.



One of the important elements of the "preventive measures" in Islam as suggested by Maududi, citing Quranic verses and the Prophet's sayings, is the seclusion of women and the segregation of male and female spheres of activities. These regulations prevent the creation of possible sexual relationships outside the framework of marriage, and work together to make society run smoothly and keep the home contented. On the basis of this school of thought, a woman's place is at home and her primary role is that of 'wife' and 'mother' "in which she excels by nature and disposition". A man, however, has his place mostly outside the home protecting the family from all danger and temptation and earning their livelihood and maintenance.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, according to this conservative interpretation of Islamic law, men and women require different kinds of schooling suited to their "natural" paths in life. Since a woman's territory is 'home', she should receive those branches of knowledge and education which will make her a good housekeeper, a good mother and a good wife.<sup>2</sup>

Further, Islam does not approve of a woman going out of her house without a genuine reason. If a woman has no male relatives to carry out her affairs outside the home, protect her and earn her livelihood, she may go out. The Quranic verses, 33: 32-33 are often cited in support of this rule:

"And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former times of ignorance; and establish regular prayer, and give regular charity; and obey God and his Apostle..."<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the men of the community, the women are not required to attend prayers such as the jum<sup>h</sup> (weekly congregational prayer), or to go to funerals. Men obtain most merit by pray-

1. Maududi, op. cit., p. 149; Galwash, op. cit., pp. 126-27.

2. Ibid, p. 156.

3. There are many different translations of the Quran. For a standard translation and commentary, see A. Yousuf Ali, The Glorious Koran (Lahore, 1934).

ing in the mosque along with other men, but women are expected to pray to best effect in private, in their own homes. It is claimed that in response to Umm Humaid Sā'idiyyah who desired to offer prayer under the Prophet's leadership, the Prophet said,

"I know that, but your offering the prayer in a corner is better than your offering it in your closet; and your offering the prayer in your closet is better than your offering it in the courtyard of your house; and your offering the prayer in the courtyard is better than your offering it in the neighbouring mosque; and your offering it in the neighbouring mosque is better than your offering it in the biggest mosque of the town."<sup>1</sup>

Women are allowed to attend the mosque at night, but not to mix with the males in the congregation, nor to stand in the front rows. They should stand separately behind the rows of men. If a woman leaves her home out of necessity, she has to take good care - she ought to be accompanied by her male relatives and dress herself properly, so as to cover her person from head to foot and walk in the street looking down, modestly.<sup>2</sup> There is debate among apologists as to whether or not the Quran enjoins hiding the face. The Quranic verse is,

"O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested..."<sup>3</sup>

Galwash argues that a woman is allowed to uncover her face and hands, but the rest of her body must be concealed before strangers, whereas Maududi claims that although the veil is not directly recommended in the Quran, nevertheless when the

1. Cited in Maududi, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-8.

2. Galwash, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

3. Quran, 33:59.

words of the Quranic verses and their well-known and generally accepted meanings and the practices during the Prophet's day are considered carefully, one finds out that the wearing of the veil and concealment of the face are also in the spirit of the Quran.

The Quranic teachings also recommend women to behave in extreme modesty and not to show their ornaments.<sup>1</sup>

"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments..."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the men are also recommended to behave modestly:

"Tell to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty..."<sup>3</sup>

And

"Do not enter houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them..."<sup>4</sup>

"When you ask women for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs..."<sup>5</sup>

1. The word "ornaments" has been interpreted variously. For some it is taken to mean the ornaments women wear, which in this case should not be displayed ostentatiously, and others contend that the term has to do with the beauty of the body (see Bevan Jones, op. cit., p. 212).

2. Quran, 24:30.

3. Ibid, 24:27.

4. Ibid, 33:53.

Moreover, the Quran enjoins women

"not to talk in a soft voice, lest the man of the unhealthy heart should cherish false hopes from them..."<sup>1</sup>

The requirements of bodily modesty are relaxed for women who have passed the age of childbearing.

"Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage, there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest..."<sup>2</sup>

These are, then, in the view of traditional thinkers, the "preventive measures" which have been recommended by the Islamic social system to regulate the relationship of the sexes and safeguard the moral welfare of the society. Muslim apologists argue that the 'pardah system' with its division of labour, prohibition of women from public appearance, its covering of women by the veil and protection of them by male members of the community does not imply women's inferiority and degradation, but is part of the duties and responsibilities allocated by God for the ordering and proper functioning of society. Galwash points out that although men and women have different functions and responsibilities in accordance with their different physical structures and capacities, they are considered equal as human beings and enjoy equal rights with men in the family and society.<sup>3</sup> While this line of commentators claims and defends strictly the concept that women in Islam have always been considered equal with and enjoy equal rights with men, they are also unable (though they make considerable effort to do so) to

1. Quran, 33:32.

2. Ibid, 24:59.

3. Galwash, op. cit., p. 126.



explain away the very famous and obvious verse in the Quran that says,

"Men are superior to women on account of qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other, and on account of the outlay they make from their substance for them. Virtuous women are obedient, careful during the husband's absence, because God hath of them been careful."<sup>1</sup>

While Maududi accepts this verse in the same spirit, Galwash tries very hard to distort the true meaning of the verses, but in the end produces a commentary which emphasizes nothing else but the unequal rights of men and women. He says that the sense of the verse appears to be nothing more than this: that a man should treat his wife with love and affection and provide for her from his abundance, while a woman should preserve his honour, attend to domestic duties and look up to him as her friend, philosopher and guide. While making an effort to interpret the verse in a more liberally acceptable way like this, in the end he arrives back at the same understanding of it reached by the respectable and responsible commentators of the verse - which of course contradicts his entire argument by implying the superiority of the men. He concludes that on the basis of the interpretation of these reliable and respectable commentators the verse does not imply anything more than a man's peculiar rights to exert certain controls over his wife. This superiority, he argues, is because of his certaininnate qualities of power, knowledge, audacity and courage. An indication of his innate and decided advantage is that all prophets, apostles, distinguished personalities such as Shakespeare, Newton, Raphael, Handel and commanders of armies have all been men, not women. Therefore women, lacking the intellectual and physical power of the other sex, should depend on men and take benefit from their strength and intellectual power, all of

1. Quran, 4:34.

which, of course, in Galwash's opinion is not an implication of women's inferiority and unequal rights.<sup>1</sup> Maududi, on the other hand, accepts the verse at its face value without making an effort to distort its meaning. He says that because man provides maintenance for the family, he has been regarded by Islam as superior to women. He is the protector, in charge of and responsible for all affairs associated with the women. And a woman who is virtuous ought to obey her husband in everything she does. If a woman goes beyond her own home when her husband has expressed the wish that she should not go out, she is liable to be cursed by every angel in heaven. Maududi rounds off his argument by citing verse 4:34 in the Quran, the admonition about women who disobey the male members of their family:

"As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them."<sup>2</sup>

### Pardah In Doniq

The position of women in Doniq is not out of step with the teachings and recommendations of Islam as commented on by the traditional school of thought.

There is an obvious distance and separateness between the two worlds of women and men in respect both of their work and of their separate domains. The world of men is a public world where they control all the social, economic and political affairs of their families and the village. They do agricultural work in the fields, handle the family's administrative affairs and transactions in the nearby town and neighbouring villages. The men

1. Galwash, op. cit., pp. 124-25.

2. Quran, 4:34. Maududi, pp. 148-49.

also control the councils of the village, the mosque, religious ceremonies and the shops. However marriage is the one and only career of women and their traditional and proper domain is the private carefully enclosed household where they are busy with housework and other home affairs of the family - child-bearing and rearing and serving those family members who occupy more visible jobs outside the home.

There are various social institutions which are widely used in Doniq to reinforce and perpetuate the separateness of the two worlds of women and men and prevent women from entering and interfering in the world of the men. These mechanisms which have also been identified and observed in other cultures and other parts of the world, are often included by anthropologists in the terms of the "pardah system"<sup>1</sup> or "modesty code".<sup>2</sup> Pardah is a Persian word which is also used in Turkish. It means "curtain", referring to the curtain which is put over windows and across doorways to protect a room from the heat in the hot weather and from the icy wind and cold in the cold weathers. But as the reports of anthropologists from various communities demonstrate, the word "pardah" or "purdah" is widely used to indicate the segregation of the sexes and concealment and seclusion of women.<sup>3</sup> In Iran including Doniq, all the features

1. C. Vreede-de Stuers, Purdah: a study of Muslim women's life in Northern India, (Assen, 1968), p. 61; see also Papanek, op. cit., p. 289.

2. R.T. Antoun, "On the Modesty of women, in Arab Muslim Villagers: a study in the Accomodation of Traditions", American Anthropologist 70 (1968), pp. 671-696, (p.672).

3. P. Jeffery, for instance, summarizes the phrases containing the word 'purdah' which are used in India to refer to the seclusion of women and separation of the worlds of the sexes such as "purdah rakna" (to keep purdah or to place a curtain), "purdah ke pichhe rehna" (to live behind the purdah), and "purdah nashin" (a person who sits behind the purdah); P. Jeffery, Frogs in a Well: Indian Women in Purdah, (London, 1979), pp. 2-3; cf. Vreede-de Stuers, op. cit., p. 61; Papanek, op. cit., p. 289; and Bevan Jones, op. cit., p. 211.

and styles of behaviour which authors often include in the term 'pardah' are present, but without a special phrase being applied to the code of behaviour.

The "pardah system" consists of the separation of the worlds of men and women by keeping a social and physical distance between them, resulting in the seclusion, concealment, veiling of women and their removal from public and in making them dependent on men, which are all practices that can be observed in Doniq. One of the important ways in which the social distance between men and women is visibly maintained is 'veiling' - the wearing of the čādirā, which also, in turn, expresses one's age, social status and religious ideas. The čādirā is a piece of cloth - 3.5 metres in length and 1.5 metres in width, behind which all women conceal themselves or wrap themselves when they leave their homes.<sup>1</sup> Čādirā is operated by all women in Doniq over the age of ten or eleven when in the company of all strange men and in some specific contexts it is also worn when dealing with close male relatives. The čādirā gives concealment to women - hiding their heads, hair, faces, hands, all bodily features and ornaments worn by them so that nothing is obvious from a woman's appearance that would enable one to recognize her. In other words, under her čādirā, she is a nobody, anonymous without face and name and difficult to communicate with. Of course, women in Doniq who have to carry out part of their work outside the home, have to compromise between čādirā and their work. During working hours the čādirā is not used to its full effect and meaning, for in order to perform her job without being disturbed, a woman cannot

1. The čādirā or veil is used under various names, forms, qualities and colours in different Muslim and non-Muslim communities. One of the commonest veils among Muslims of Northern India and Pakistan is the burqa which is made of either silk or cotton material, respectively appropriate for rich and poor women, and consists of a long coat with sleeves with a cape-veil which covers the head and shoulders, reaching to the waist, and a smaller veil attached along the hem of the veil to cover the entire face. (See Vreede-de Stuers, op. cit., p. 60, and Papanek, op. cit., p. 295).



drop it loosely right down to the ground around herself by which action she would hide her bodily features. She has to wrap it around her waist and is unable to cover her face, though as soon as she hears a man approaching, she drops her work and covers her face with the čādirā holding it with her teeth in order to be able to continue the work. Outside working hours when she visits a house for instance she is absolutely covered by the čādirā and is completely faceless and nameless. With such a person one finds it very difficult to communicate. Obviously, veiling in the true sense, cuts the woman off from all social life going on around her.

In fact the čādirā is, as Papanek points out,

"a logical supplement to the use of enclosed living spaces and enables women to move out of these spaces in a kind of portable seclusion."<sup>1</sup>

Even if the veil restricts woman's social contact and has a forbidding appearance, it is indeed a liberating invention under the protection of which a secluded woman finds it possible to leave the confinement of her home. Without it women would certainly be confined to their homes. Owing to the poor quality of the čādirā fabric and because every woman is traditionally presented with a čādirā by her family each new year - bāyrām - a woman might own several of these garments. The čādirā is changed according to the demands of the situation or occupation of a woman. The čādirā for work is different from the one used by a woman when she goes to the town. Moreover, owning many čādirā and wearing different veils for different occasions, is an extra element of disguise which reinforces social distance between men and women. Even if a man might have

1. Papanek, op. cit., p. 295. Cf. Verity Saifullah Khan, "Purdah in the British Situation", in D.L. Barker and S. Allen, Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage, (London, 1976), pp. 224-245, (pp. 226-27).

some idea of one's veil, which might enable him to recognize a woman, on another occasion when the čādīrā had been changed, he would be unable to recognize her. Apart from being an obvious sign of the wearer's secluded status, the čādīrā is one small element in a complex social interaction, which has its own vocabulary of body language and signals. Used very specifically, the čādīrā may express many different shades of modesty or of provocation.

"It is typically shifted and redraped in response to changes in the immediate situation, and although the gestures used in this rearrangement do not necessarily indicate changes in seclusion, they do usually indicate degrees of 'respect' paid to others by women through the extent of body-covering."<sup>1</sup>

For instance, in front of a father-in-law, a daughter-in-law covers her face as well as her whole body with the čādīrā as a gesture of respect, but in the presence of her mother-in-law she does not cover her face, but only the upper part of her body.

The social distance between men and women is not always only maintained by the čādīrā. Whether a woman can cover herself or not, there are more subtle and symbolic ways which reinforce her distance from men and her seclusion. These subtle ways consist of gōz sātāšmā māk - 'avoiding eye contact' or 'eye pardah'—bowing the head, and keeping silent in the presence of men. When a woman steps outside her home or meets a man in the street, her head becomes slightly lowered and her eyes are lowered, gazing at the ground a few steps ahead, in order to avoid eye contact with him, and she avoids greeting or speaking to her female friends and relatives, lest her voice be heard by a strange man. A modest woman's voice must never be heard by nā-mahram—'permitted in marriage' men-out-

1. Papanek, op. cit., p. 295.

side the home. In Doniq, when two women speak to each other in the street, as soon as a man passes by, they lower their voices or continue their discussion in whispers in order not to attract the attention of the man. The village mullā has taught the women that their voices are attractive and exciting and that because of this they have been religiously prohibited - haram - from being heard by men. It is better for a woman not to talk in front of a nā-mahram - permitted in marriage man - and on occasions when speaking is necessary such as when answering a knock at the door, it is considered proper for her to put one of her fingers in her mouth in order to alter the tone of her voice and produce a strange sound that will prevent the men from becoming excited. Therefore, when someone comes to the door of her home, a woman refuses to answer the door if possible, or she sends children to answer it, or, out of necessity, she hides herself behind the door asking the caller's business so quietly that the person at the door is hardly able to hear her. When a woman needs to attract the attention of her husband or children for some important reason, she cannot call out to them. She either goes and catches up with them or sends someone to fetch them.

These features of the 'pardah system' are so subtly symbolic and vary so much with different contexts that one can hardly recognize them unless he or she is really familiar with them or a trained anthropologist. This is one reason why some writers who have worked in societies where the 'pardah system' was in operation, have given varying and sometimes even contradictory views on and opposing accounts of their observations of pardah. For instance, Woodsmall, an American scholar writing in 1936 about Muslim women, points out that

"at least 96% of Muslim women, perhaps even more, observe purdah consistently and logically."<sup>1</sup>

1. R.F. Woodsmall, Moslem Women Enter a New World, (London, 1936), p. 41.

And later writing in 1960, she seems to contradict her earlier view;

"women of the rural population, some 80% of the total, have never worn the burqa.<sup>1</sup>

However, on the basis of the diverse and subtle features of the pardah system just described, it can be confirmed without doubt that all Muslim women living in villages or towns observe pardah in an essential sense, not merely in the sense of wearing the veil only.

In short, wearing the *čādīrā* or veil, avoiding eye contact, covering the head and lowering the voice are all means which are widely used in Doniq to keep the traditional social distance between men and women and deprive women of public and social interaction, making them more dependant on male members of their families.

Finally, a general and more apparent feature of the pardah system is the physical distance between the sexes which is practised in all family and social relations. In North India and Pakistan even within the family, the sexes may live in separate spaces, dividing the house by a curtain or even a more solid construction into the male section (mardāna) and the female area (zanāna) and outside the home all institutions and public facilities such as buses and trains are fitted with both zanāna and mardāna.<sup>2</sup> In Doniq all gatherings for feasts, festivals, marriage ceremonies, funerals and religious ceremonies are divided into ārvād yeri - women's section - and kiši yeri - the men's area - meaning that men and women gather in separate rooms in a compound, if there is enough room; if not a

1. R.F. Woodsmall, Women and the New East, (Washington, 1960), p. 102.

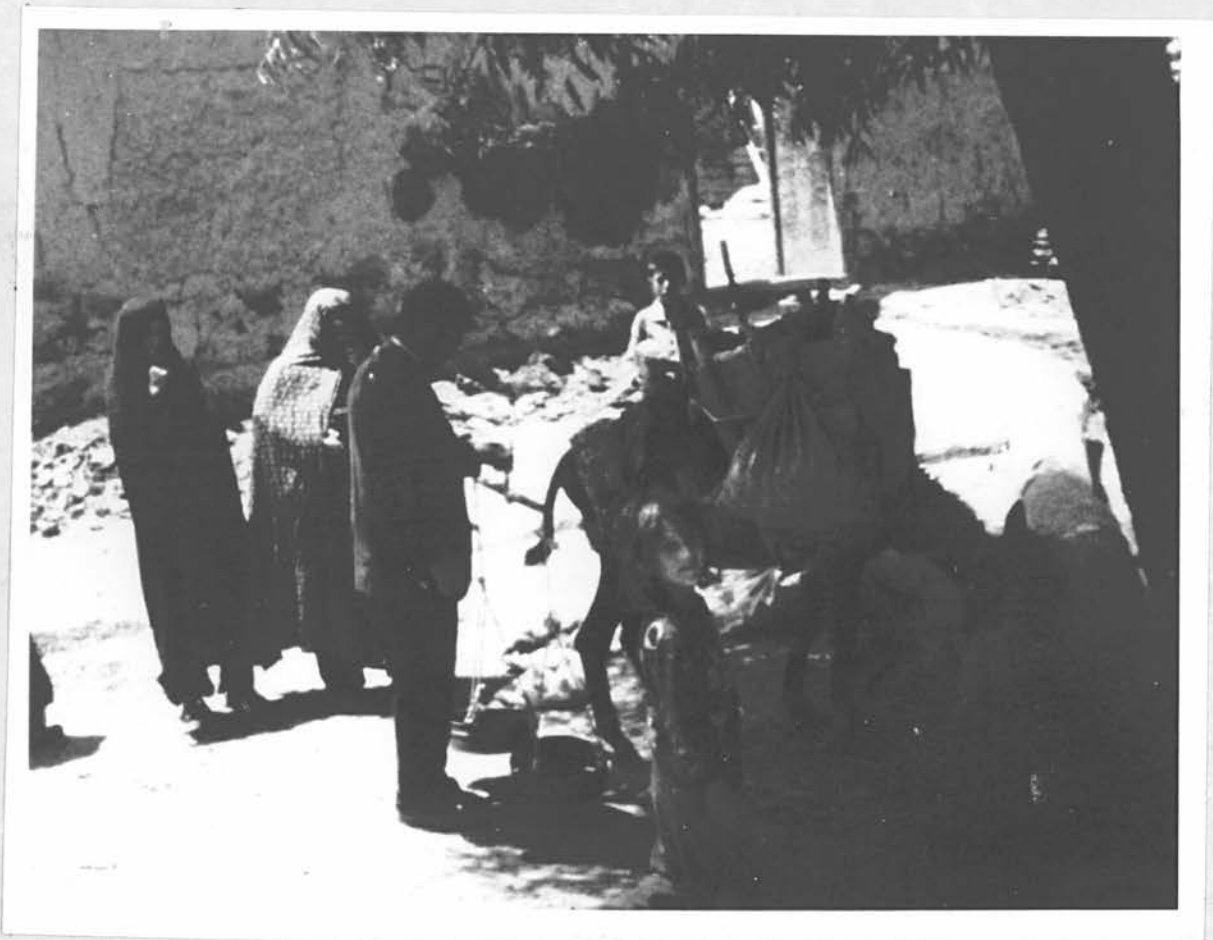
2. See Vreede-de Stuers, op.cit., pp.53-59; Papanek, op.cit., p.294; Jeffery, op.cit., p. 53; and Saifullah Khan, op.cit., p.226.



neighbour's house is borrowed until the social activity is over. However there are no male and female sections inside homes. Even if a family is an extended one (brothers and their wives), all family members gather and eat in the same room, though as soon as a strange visitor arrives, the separateness takes effect. If the visitor is a man, he is received in the men's part of the house, but in the case of women visitors, they are received in the women's quarters. Sometimes, those receiving visitors might not separate a strange couple who have come to the village from outside. These sorts of guest might be received together, but in a case of this kind the women of the household would disappear and the visitors would be entertained by men and in the men's part of the home. In such circumstances the women of the household deliver food to the men from behind the curtain and the men serve the guests. Sometimes the older women of the household might enter the room to say "hello" and ask the visitor's health while standing, after which they will leave the room hurriedly. A woman never stays in a room where there is a strange male visitor, even if her menfolk are present. When a man has got a yād - a strange visitor - there is no sign of the household's womenfolk. They hide themselves in a separate room if there is a spare one; otherwise they wander about the courtyard or spend a few hours with a close neighbour, until the visitor leaves. On one occasion in Doniq I was told, Hāji Majid's daughter-in-law, who had recently married into the family, after living in the city, did not hide herself from a strange male visitor, and even offered him a cup of tea without veiling her face. All the village people gossiped and chatted behind her back and those of her in-laws, condemning city girls as being shameless.

A strange man cannot and must not enter a house until he has made sure the menfolk of the house are at home. When entering, he coughs as a warning that he is there in order to let the women cover or hide themselves.

The physical separation between the sexes is also apparent as being applicable in public. The mullā has taught the village men not to allow their womenfolk to go out of their houses and even when they are taken on the pilgrimage to Mashad, the mullā has recommended that they should be transported there and back in an enclosed vehicle so that no man can see them. But as people put it themselves, in the village it is impossible to stop women from going out, for if a woman does not fetch water from the spring or does not prepare fuel out of doors, and do various other tasks, who is going to do these jobs? Women in Doniq have to carry out some parts of their work outside the home, but this does not mean that they do not maintain a physical and social distance from men. In some contexts, as it has already been noted, the more subtle features of the pardah system are sufficient to contrive a distance between men and women and in other settings the čādīrā and physical distance separate men and women. For instance, when the village men gather in a group in front of the mosque to chat, a woman cannot possibly pass in front of them if she has urgent business to attend to. She goes out of her way and reaches her destination by an alternative path, even if it means walking much farther. She would feel embarrassed and ashamed to walk in front of a gathering of men. Sometimes, women even avoid performing certain tasks immediately outside the house if there are two or three men meeting together. It took nearly two weeks for some repairs to be carried out by men at a place near the village spring. During that time women completely stopped coming and fetching water from the spring, a routine task for them. Their menfolk took over the job until the men had finished the repairs. Following the custom strictly, when the women pass in front of men, they wrap themselves so thoroughly in their čādīrā that they cannot see ahead of them very well, casting their head and eyes down and walking quietly and very modestly so that they do not give any indication that they could possibly be immodest. Very often I saw women trip over when having to walk in front of



Bargaining with the pedlar.

a group of men either because they had hidden themselves so strictly or out of embarrassment.

No contact with yād ādām - a strange man from outside own family group or family of marriage - is permissible outside the house. No woman except women who have passed the age of menopause, ought to converse with or so much as exchange a word with a yād ādām, even if the matter is urgent, or she will be considered abirisiz and hayāsiz - immodest and dishonoured. If they are near relations of the opposite sex, they may greet one another without exchanging glances or after passing one another. The only contact that all village women (irrespective of their age and whether they are native to the village, or incomers) may have with strangers without being regarded as immodest or shameless, is their contact with čarči - itinerant tradesmen - who visit the village from time to time during the year. To carry out trading transactions with these travelling merchants the women adopt a relationship of "pseudo kinship", which allows them to converse somewhat freely with them. The čarči addresses the women as bājim - my sister - or for older ones nanam - 'my mother' or 'aunt' or 'grandmother' - boyih nanam - and the women address him as qārdās - brother - or oğlim - 'my son'. These terms indicate that between the pedlar and the women there exist the kind of relationship that has nothing whatsoever to do with sex, and so they can talk on familiar terms, which promotes a satisfactory exchange of goods. Women purchase things from čarči on credit and in their own names. The pedlar has no contact with the women's menfolk and when he wants to collect payment he asks the women themselves. The women's relationship with these outsiders is translated into kinship terms and this allows the unavoidable circumstances of contact to take place without criticism by either men or women.<sup>1</sup>

1. Cf. N. Tapper, op. cit., p. 59.



Generally speaking the casual visitor to Doniq would see the 'pardah system' working with apparent harmony in all levels of village society. However, the smallest attempt at examination would reveal that 'pardah' is practised with slight variations, adapting to different socio-economic circumstances in the village. It varies according to the women's family status, religious notions and ages, and in relation to the different contexts with regard to the men, whether her older, distant relatives or total strangers. In some contexts, as Vreede-de Stuers explains it, pardah is 'strict', in others it is 'partial' and in some other situations it is 'intermittent'.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the categorization by Vreede-de Stuers relates mostly to the style of wearing the burqa and its absence among Muslim women in Delhi, but in Doniq, the categorization cannot be relevant in relation to the čādīrā, because the čādīrā has been and always is observed by women of all ages, on all occasions and within all contexts. The division is completely relevant in relation to women's consideration of other features of 'pardah' in accordance with age and social status. Girls after puberty keep 'strict' and total pardah from men, they never leave their homes until their time for marriage has come and they have no contact with men who are 'permitted in marriage' - nā-mahram. After marriage, a woman's pardah partially relaxes. She resumes tasks outside her home - fetching water, and washing clothes at the river - and visits her parent's house even without being chaperoned, for the work is so heavy and there is so much to do in the village that another older woman or man who is an important part of the labour force cannot be spared from work to chaperon a young woman, when she goes about outside the home. Nevertheless, these young married women are not allowed to attend xeir-u-šar - 'mourning or celebration activities'—which take place in strange households or even in the home of a relative. They go out of the village very rarely, only on very necessary occasions such as to visit a doctor.

1. Vreede-de Stuers, op. cit., pp. 84-5.

Most of the younger married women told me that they had never been to the town and could not imagine what a town looked like. They said that their mothers and older relatives who had visited the town had told them that there were cars, streets, different types of buildings, well dressed people, older girls going to and from school, but they could not imagine what it all looked like. Some said that they wished they could fall ill, in order to force their male relatives to take them to the doctor in the town, which would be a good chance to visit the town. In contrast to this situation, women who have passed menopause, keep "partial" pardah with men both in their private homes and out of doors in the village. They walk about in the village freely, taking part in all kinds of social activities in relatives' and non-relatives' houses. They are often (in Fuller's words) "vulgar" and "bawdy" in the presence of men and may even argue with them.<sup>1</sup> They are quite courageous among strange men, talk to them with considerable freedom and establish informal joking relations with them, often criticizing their behaviour openly. Sometimes, women past the age of childbearing and therefore not considered sexually attractive, make the important discovery that they can manage without the protection of male relatives and group together to go to the town to enjoy themselves. They do shopping for the household and their children, go to the hamām - public baths - and walk around the town. But this situation is exceptional. Many old women told me that even if their menfolk are willing for them to go by themselves to the town, they refuse, because they lack experience in finding their way around in the town or in activities beyond the home. They were afraid to take a taxi, lest the taxi driver should see them without a male companion and abduct them. They said that they did not know how to cope with the bustle of the city - how to take a taxi, how to find addresses, and how to cross the streets without having an accid-

1. A.H. Fuller, Buarij, Portrait of a Lebanese Muslim Village, (Cambridge, 1970), p. 59.

ent. Taxis and busy streets were not to be found in the village and their menfolk had always handled the problem of getting about in the city.

The same conditions as applied to the elderly women of Doniq in regard to keeping "partial" pardah are true of the very poor women of Doniq. They talk and joke with strange men, go to other people's houses freely and visit the city without the protection of men. However, although poor women and older women relax in their relations with men, this does not mean that they do not practice the 'pardah' system. It is simply that circumstances have affected the degree of their observance of 'pardah'.

In short, in Doniq, the 'pardah system' - confining women to private and depriving them of public and all social, political and economic relations, makes them dependent beings in family and social relations. A woman always needs a man to provide her livelihood which is, as it will be indicated later, a main source of imbalance between sexes in family relations. She needs a man to chaperone her, protect her against other men and handle her affairs in public and in public organizations mainly occupied and controlled by men.

However, the position of women just considered in Islam and in Doniq is not confined to Islam or to Muslim communities, as many writers believe. Although Islam provides a moral and ideological justification for 'pardah' and seclusion of women, this does not mean that it originated in the teachings of Islam or that Islam is the only force behind the seclusion of women. Very often western sources and even Middle Eastern people attribute the pattern of 'pardah' and its laws and customs to Islam and take the view that women in the Middle East under Islam are unique as an oppressed group - they are considered deplorable, degraded, confined as they are to the home, the immediate family and children, hidden behind veils and prev-

ented from taking part in the community.<sup>1</sup> Such an assessment I believe, could only be made by those critics who know only modern western society and some Islamic societies, but who are not aware of what is going on in other countries and cultures. Many anthropologists' reports demonstrate that similar features of 'pardah' but with varying degrees, are observed in many non-Islamic communities in various parts of the world - India, China, Greece, and Balkans, the Iberian Peninsula, some other parts of Europe and all over the Middle East. Anthropological material from these parts of the world has cited instances of strict distance being kept between the sexes in respect to their work, their domains, and of women who are strictly secluded and veiled, confined mostly to 'home' and made dependent economically and socially on menfolk. Instead of the tenets of Islam which are often presented as the basis of the observation of the 'pardah' in Muslim communities, in these non-Islamic worlds, the two notions of 'honour' - izzat and 'shame' - 'sharm'-are reported to be responsible for the position and seclusion of women. Men associate their honour, esteem and status with the chastity and good behaviour of their womenfolk. The slightest misbehaviour before or after marriage brings unlimited shame to them and ruins their sense of manliness and the honour of the whole kingroup. The sanctions and penalties are very powerful and severe for violation of the notion of honour and often include death for women. Because women are vulnerable to outside sexual assault, constant protection is given to their virtue. Although men's sexual freedom is assured, they are always on guard against the coveting of other equally free males of the women of their family. Young women hardly leave their homes, and when they do leave they are chaperoned by men or older women and behave in extremely modest ways - for example, by casting their eyes and heads downwards and avoid-

1. See Kendall, op.cit., pp. 3-5; Gordon, op.cit., pp.9-12; N. Haggag Youssef, Women and Work in Developing Societies (California, 1974), pp. 83-84; C.C. Rice, Persian Women and their ways (London, 1923), p. 95; finally see "Status of Women in India"; a Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee (1971-74); (Dehli, 1975), pp. 15-16.



ing exchanging any conversation with strange men, by keeping their distance from men, covering themselves strictly with veils and leaving all affairs to the men to carry out.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, in all these areas the features of 'pardah' or the 'modesty code' are not observed in the same way or to the same degree, but they normally share many of the ideals and normative patterns of the tradition as it has been described. The position and seclusion of women in Doniq is similar to a large degree to the status of women in Pakistan and India. It is argued that the attribution of 'honour' to male and 'shame' to female has its spirit in Islam and thus Islam has influenced the status of women in the non-Islamic communities. But historical material on the Middle East and some other parts of the world makes it appear that pardah and the two notions of 'honour' and 'shame' existed long before Islam was born. Pardah and the seclusion of women, it is claimed were adopted by Islam itself from other cultures. Keddie and Beck write that,

"Even veiling is not original to Islam; the earliest iconographic depiction of it dates from Palmyra in

1. See J.K. Campbell, Honour, Family and Patronage (Oxford, 1964); J.G. Peristiany (ed.), Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society, (Chicago, 1965); B.S. Denich, "Sex and Power in the Balkans", in M.Z. Rosaldo and I. Lamphere (eds.) Women, Culture and Society (Stanford, 1974), pp. 243-262; L. Paul, "The Mastery of Work and the Mystery of Sex in a Guatemalan Village", the same work, pp. 281-99; E. Friedl, Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece, (New York, 1962); E. Friedl, "The Position of Women: Appearance and Reality", in Anthropological Quarterly, 40 (1967), pp. 97-109; S.F. Silverman, "The Life Crisis as a Clue to Social Functions", in Anthropological Quarterly, 40 (1967), pp. 127-38; S.K. Mohsen, "The Legal Status of Women among Amlad'Ali", in the same Journal, pp. 153-66; A. Appadurai (ed.), Status of Women in South Asia, (Bombay, 1954); P.C. Dodd, "The Effect of Religious Affiliation on Women's Role in Middle Eastern Arab Society", in Journal of Comparative Family Studies, V (1974), pp. 117-29; R.T. Antoun, "On the Modesty of Women...", op. cit.; N.M. Abu Zahra, "A Reply", American Anthropologist, 72 (1970), pp. 1079-88; R.T. Antoun, "Antoun's Reply to Abu Zahra", American Anthropologist, 72 (1970), pp. 1088-92; J. Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins", Ethnology, 10 (1971), pp. 1-24; P.C. Dodd, "Family Honour and the Forces of Change in Arab Society", International Journal of Middle East Studies, 4 (1973), pp. 40-54; A. Whitehead, "Sexual Antagonism in Herefordshire", Allen and Barker, op. cit., pp. 169-203; J. Davis, People of the Mediterranean, (London, 1977); and F. McCarthy, Bengali Village Women, (Michigan, 1967).

"the first century A.D., and it was practised in the Byzantine Empire and adjacent areas before Islam, although it is not known to what degree. As Muslim converts and Arabs extended this Near Eastern custom, they interpreted certain Quranic passages as referring to veiling."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly R. Levy points out that:

"It is not possible to say... when the seclusion of women began to be general. The early interpreters of the Koran were men who originated in Persia, a land in which the women had long been secluded ... and it is probable that the system was established in Islam one-and-a-half centuries after the death of the Prophet..."<sup>2</sup>

It is believed that the seclusion of women had long been practised in Persia and Byzantium to differentiate the free woman from the slave girl who was exposed for public scrutiny in the slave market. Jeffery also notes that seclusion and veiling of women was not unknown in India before Muslims invaded it in the tenth century.<sup>3</sup>

It is claimed that the two notions of 'honour' and 'shame', which have been presented by most scholars as responsible for the seclusion of women, existed long before religion substituted itself as a guiding motive and social value to safeguard the morality of society.<sup>4</sup> Schneider suggests that the seclusion of women and the two codes of 'honour' and 'shame' have their origins in, and are characteristics of pastoral and agricultural societies where, owing to the ecology, a premium is placed on

1. L. Beck and N. Keddie, "Introduction", in L. Beck and N. Keddie (eds.), Women in the Muslim World, (London, 1978), pp. 1-34 (p.25); see also R. Bārahani, Dar Engēlab-e Iran ċe sodeh ast va ċe xāhad šod, (Tehran, 1340 Sh), pp. 224-28.

2. R. Levy, An Introduction to the Sociology of Islam, Vol. 1 (London, 1931-3), p. 180; cf. Arasteh, op. cit., p. 104.

3. Jeffery, op. cit., p. 26.

4. Dodd, "Family Honour and the Forces...", op. cit., p. 40.

large families. Therefore women (who might bear the sons who make the family economically and politically viable) are for these people "contested sources" much like pasture, land and water, which need special attention, protection and seclusion and must not be kidnapped, abducted or eloped with. He goes on to suggest that when there has been no organized religion to protect the morality of a society or state, or when official organizations have been absent and security left unguarded "from above", rural communities (pastoral and agricultural) have been observed to develop their own forms of social control - taking the form of codes of 'honour' and 'shame'. These rules were seen to take shape as required by powerful internal and inter-community upheavals brought about by pressure from outside.<sup>1</sup>

Altogether, it seems clear that the seclusion and veiling of women neither originated in Islam, nor is it exclusively an Islamic institution. It has existed since long before Islam came into existence and is carried on in non-Muslim communities in various parts of the world as well. It should be borne in mind that the point here is not to contest the fact that 'seclusion' and 'pardah' are not Islamic values and laws. Obviously, whether by misinterpretation or by adoption from other non-Islamic customs and cultures, as most of the reformist school of thinking claims, 'pardah' is now regarded as an important ideal and institution of Islam. More important, what is special about Islam is that 'Islam' is a religious ideology and in its association with God, the Quran and the Prophet provides the strongest setting and ideological and moral justification for the perpetuation of the pardah system. Veiling and other seclusion values might possibly be discarded in non-Muslim countries, but it is harder in Muslim communities.

In addition to the variables of ideology (Islam) and culture

1. Schneider, op. cit., pp. 3-18.

(honour and shame) which are partially responsible for the perpetuation of the seclusion, there is also a very important 'socio-economic' factor bearing on the restriction of women. As anthropologists report from various communities, the concealment and veiling of women is a matter of social standing and prestige for families. It is an indication of their prosperity and wealth. To maintain *pardah* and seclusion fully necessitates a certain standard of living which a poor family can hardly afford. It is reported from India and Pakistan that to observe an ideal *pardah* requires more than one room and servants to maintain contact between the world of men and women inside the household, carrying food, messages and so on between them and to keep them in contact with outside world by doing shopping and carrying out other necessary affairs. A curtained vehicle is also necessary to transport the women when they travel from home on necessary business. These are luxuries for the poor and therefore impossible. The poor can neither provide these facilities necessary for ideal seclusion, nor can they keep their womenfolk at home; they have to work outside the home on the land or in factories to supplement their families' insufficient income, in which case maintaining ideal *pardah* is obviously out of the question.<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the association of seclusion with socio-economic status, two important studies have been published recently - Goody (1976), and Boserup (1970) and it may be appropriate to comment on them briefly. While Jack Goody examines extensive social organizations - forms of marriage, marriage transactions, kin-groups and other facets of 863 societies from all over the globe, coded in the *Ethnographic Atlas* (1967) to discover general and distinctive features about them, he notes and presents interesting perspectives on the seclusion of women. In relation to seclusion of women, Goody is struck by a major dis-

1. Saifullah Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 229; Jeffery, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Bevan Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 220; and Papanek, *op. cit.*, p. 322.



inction between Africa and Eurasia. He proceeds with his analysis on the basis of productive resources and mode of production of the two areas, arguing that advanced agriculture, whether by plough or irrigation, is the system of production of Eurasia, while hoe agriculture is the characteristic of Africa. While the limitations of hoe agriculture lie in self-sufficiency and in the inability to produce more than one consumes, plough agriculture allows a farmer to produce surplus crops and this larger quantity of goods produced enables a complex division of labour and stratification based upon different incomes and styles of life. Another facet of this more sophisticated agriculture by plough is the population growth which creates a shortage of land (the most important source of income) and raises its value. The more scarce land becomes, the more intensively it is exploited and the more vigorously its proprietors tend to try to hold on to it. Goody stresses that much of Eurasia is densely populated and land is still the major productive resource which is scarce and is distributed unequally. Therefore, one of the important means by which one becomes capable of maintaining his status, or "life style" and that of his children in such a stratified society and of directing the valuable productive resource to his own benefit is 'inheritance' and "pre-mortem inheritance" (dowry), seclusion of women and arranged marriage. The surplus of plough agriculture in Eurasia permits women to avoid direct involvement in subsistence production, but to retain status by acquiring property from their parents in the form of inheritance and dowry. However, when women receive property from men either by inheritance or dowry, especially when it is land which devolves on them as "residual heirs" (when a man has no male heirs), their marriages are definitely affected and even controlled by their inheritance. Women who are inheritors in families with valuable property cannot marry just anyone. Their marriages are of very special concern to their parents who try to pair them with partners of a similar socio-economic standing so that they will not have to step down on the social ladder or suffer

from a lower standard of living. Girls' marriages are arranged by their relatives in order to establish the girls in appropriate 'matches' and it is necessary to curb their activities - seclude them before marriage, and forbid any attachment to the members of the opposite sex which might lead to unsuitable marriages.<sup>1</sup> Ester Boserup presents a slightly different perspective in relation to seclusion. Considering the role of women in the development of society, Boserup distinguishes between two patterns of subsistence: one is 'female farming' which is the characteristic of Africa, Indian and Negro communities of Latin America and tribal people in general and another is identified by Boserup as the 'male farming system' which is particularly characteristic of Asia. Her differentiation of the mode of production into 'male' and 'female' system of farming is based on population density and technology. Her thesis is summarized in the following words:

"In very sparsely populated regions where shifting cultivation is used, men do little farmwork, the women doing most. In somewhat more densely populated regions where the agricultural system is that of extensive plough cultivation, women do little farm work and men do much more..."<sup>2</sup>

Another additional and very important contrast between the distribution of work in African shifting cultivation (with female farming) and Asian plough cultivation (with male farming) is the difference between the organization of tribal society and the social order of settled farming areas where cultivators own their own farm-plots.<sup>3</sup> Plough agriculture is found in regions with private ownership of land and with numerous landless people whose labour is available for hire. Therefore, as the result of availability of hired labour a large proportion of

1. Jack Goody, Production and Reproduction (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 1-22.

2. Ester Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development (New York, 1970), pp. 23-24.

3. Ibid, p. 27.

women are released from agricultural work and are confined wholly to the work at home. In female agriculture, where most of the agricultural work is performed by women, polygamy is frequent and a bride price is asked for a woman by her family, to be paid by the future husband and his family. In addition, women enjoy considerable freedom of movement and some economic independence. On the other hand, in a male agricultural system where women do not work in the field or do less agricultural work, most women live in seclusion, appearing rarely in the streets and then only under the protection of a veil and their male family members. Few marriages are, in this type of society, polygamous, dowry is paid by the girl's family and women are entirely dependent upon their male relatives for economic support.

The system of production and the distribution of property are also important forces which lead to the seclusion of women. For wealthy families, veiling, seclusion and preventing women from working outside the home are important from two points of view: on the one hand, these customs form an indication of their wealth which, in turn, reinforces their social standing and prestige in a hierarchically organized community; and on the other hand by preventing women from going about freely in the world outside the home and limiting their activities, they assure proper marriages for them and safeguard their wealth, social status and style of life, and, more important, they ascertain the correct paternity and purity of children to whom to pass on property. For poor families, although pardah and seclusion might be important, it is not as deep-rooted as for more prosperous families. As mentioned already, their womenfolk have to work outside the home, in which case it is hardly possible to maintain pardah in its true sense and in ideal form. Besides this, the poor do not have wealth to pass on to their children and, unlike their more well-to-do neighbours, they do not worry about their compatibility with families of the same status, for it is prosperity which ultimately reinforces the

'pardah' system.

Ursula Sharma writing in 1980 is another scholar who has been carrying out research on the relationship between property, production and women's roles in various peasant societies in North India. She has recently developed some new and relevant ideas about the phenomenon of 'pardah' and the seclusion of women. Although she accepts the general concern and argument of Jack Goody who established new methods of connecting gender roles with productivity and saw a link between pardah and social differentiation, she disagrees with some of his points. She notes Goody's argument that plough cultivation generates surplus production which in turn results in a stratified society, in which the dominant classes tend to maintain their status and elite style of life through marriage with partners of equal status and through vertical inheritance (from parents to children) and pre-mortem inheritance (dowry).<sup>1</sup> These tendencies increase the number of factors which inhibit women's freedom, both sexual and social - sexual segregation, pardah and chaperonage. Sharma disagrees with Goody on two points. First she argues that Goody has formed his analysis on the basis of the legal practice or on what is prescribed in religious and traditional laws rather than on actual practice. Using her own case studies and evidence collected from various communities she demonstrates that those laws which provide for inheritance by daughters carry no real weight. Because women are so restricted in their movements outside the home, and because the ubiquitous dictates of the pardah system require that a woman always needs a man to protect her, most women give up their legal right to a share in the inheritance of their father's estate. In spite of civil and religious laws which entitle her to an inheritance, a good wife, mother or sister normally renounces any claim to specific property (in the form of land) which her sons or brothers might inherit. Even when some wo-

1. Cf. J. Goody and S.J. Tambiah, Bridewealth and Dowry (Cambridge, 1973).



men, in exceptional circumstances, do fall heir to land (for example, when their fathers have no male heirs), the rigid social rules about how women should act in public effectively rob them of any real control over their own property. What usually happens is that the woman's husband or male relatives take over the management and administration of the land and determine the use of the income it brings.

Sharma's second disagreement with Goody concerns dowry as a type of birthright or 'inheritance' for a daughter during her father's lifetime, in Eurasian cultures. Dowry, she points out, consists of goods taken with a daughter to her husband's home, and often includes such items as furniture and other domestic necessities, clothing and jewellery. Unlike land these do not generate income. Nor do they require other people's labour. And of course they lack saleable value or characteristics which bring direct financial returns through their conversion into other forms of property or wealth. In other words, dowry can not be compared in realistic terms with the inheritance a man might expect to receive from his father's estate, which is usually (especially when it is land) a source of the perpetuation of wealth - a self-renewing inheritance. Sharma feels that even if we place dowry within the category of inheritance, it must be regarded as an asset received by a son-in-law rather than by the daughter to whom it is nominally assigned. Property included in dowry is not handed over directly to a bride, but is given to the man she marries. His family have the right to consume it and to look upon it as a common asset of the entire family - for use when really needed. As such, dowry can be distributed among a large number of family members when a man moves into his own (separate) home, or when the estate of the kin-groups is divided among various heirs. Obviously, Sharma disagrees with Goody's claim that women are property-owners within the hierarchical system, not obliged to work, yet supported by dowry and inheritance. Women, Sharma emphasizes, do not normally own or control land which is the key to

income.

Sharma herself focuses on interrelationships within the family and on stratification observable within the household - social phenomena not taken into account by Goody. Sharma analyses the parts played by women in the lives of two communities: a Punjabi village where women make only a small contribution to the agricultural work-force because the village is relatively prosperous, and Himachal Pradesh, where women do take an active part in agriculture - either as unpaid labourers on the family's own land, or as wage-earning workers in other farmers' fields. From studies of these groups Sharma observes that there is very little overall difference between the women in the two areas, in terms of status. In both regions, at all levels of society, the pervading female ideals are the modest and submissive bride, the dutiful wife and the respected and indulgent mother. Women are seen as subordinate to men and young women as subordinate to older ones and this notion is felt all through family life. A severe curb is placed on women's participation in both household and community affairs by the pervading standards for women's deportment in public. These standards emphasize female modesty, seclusion and invisibility and lay down a passive role for them which limits their activities, particularly their dealings with men. Opportunities for economic independence and management of their own work and other activities are as restricted for Himachali women as for their counterparts in the Punjab. Sharma postulates that the key factor determining the status of women in both areas is the dependence of women on men - rather than their submission to men. Women rely on men because men are the owners or leaseholders of land. The pardah system, the accepted notion of public anonymity, the avoidance of general contact between men and women, the subordination of women in the home itself, and the leaning towards educating men to a higher level than that attained by the women - all these practices act as complex secondary sources of women's moral, practical and ritual dependence on

their menfolk - types of dependence which foster and indeed bolster their primary economic dependence. Sharma concentrates on the relationship of pardah to the ownership of property and draws the conclusion that the practices and values controlling the pardah system have dual parts to act out, ideologically. On the one hand, the system props up people's inclination to perpetuate the custom of male inheritance and tradition of giving to men direct control of the means of productivity - all of which forces women into a position of dependence on men. The norms of the pardah system prevent women (in their isolation) from exercising direct control over the land, which forms the most important source of income. To buy for themselves a guarantee of protection by their kinsmen, in this secluded society, women disclaim their rightful inheritance. In regard to the second effect of pardah, Sharma lays emphasis on Goody's argument that pardah acts as a consolidating force, strengthening property-owning family groups and shoring up their social standing and their values and cultural traditions.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, the discussion has been based on a general examination of the institution of 'pardah' and the forces leading to its practice. It has been pointed out that although 'Islam' and the two concepts of 'honour' and 'shame' provide ideological and moral grounds for the perpetuation of the pardah system and restriction of women, they cannot be the only and exclusive agencies behind the seclusion of women. Anthropologists who have studied the relationship between gender roles and production suggest that the distribution of property and different modes of production are also important factors bearing on the seclusion of women. Veiling and hiding women from the world outside the home, is considered to be a status symbol. Besides, as Goody relates, pardah has the effect of consolidating and strengthening property-owning family groups and of

1. U. Sharma, Women and Property in North-West India, (London, 1980), pp. 14-15; and see also, pp. 195-204.

propping up their social rank. There is, however, another dimension which is relevant to the question of the seclusion and restriction of women. The practices and values of the pardah system tend to prevent women from having any direct control over the productive and wealth-generating assets of their families, mainly land, and therefore women are forced into a position of dependence on men.

The following chapters will examine the basic question upon which my research has been based - that is what changes has the recent involvement of Doniq women in income-generating work, made in their social position. The first chapter has indicated how the recent developments in Doniq have modified the features of women's work by involving them in an extra activity (carpet manufacture) which has been and is of immense importance to the economy of Doniq. Therefore, it is vital to consider the details of these modifications which have taken place in the financial and social status of women, since they contribute so considerably to the family budget.

For simplicity of presentation, the following chapters will discuss the 'pre-carpet' scene with respect to women's traditional work: marriage, housework and fecundity. In other words, these next three chapters will be mainly concerned with the general position of women before the development of the carpet industry, especially in regard to their sexuality, deportment, marriage and family decisions, and to the importance given to their 'housework'. They will also analyse the relationship women have to the economic resources of the family and to their fertility and the children.

The final chapter will then analyse the impact of carpet manufacture on these aspects of women's lives.



## CHAPTER 3

### MARRIAGE

Marriage is accepted as the norm by everyone in Doniq. Only those who are unable to fulfil the duties demanded in a marriage relationship are not bound to this norm. I found no women in the village who were not either married or at least engaged by the age of 16 or 18, except one girl, who was twenty years and mentally defective.

Obviously, one reason that marriage is so generally expected of women in Doniq and in similar societies is the limited number of paid jobs for them and their financial dependence on men. Since women have been deprived of economic independence, marriage is, in fact, considered a crucial source of livelihood for women, for they will not receive any protection after the death of the men of their blood kin.

Indeed, under Islamic law and the civil law of Iran women are accorded some economic rights. However these rights are rarely acknowledged in Doniq. Islamic law stipulates that sons, daughters, wives and parents are all entitled to a share in a deceased man's estate. In general terms every son, no matter his age, inherits a share equal to that of his brothers, but daughters are apportioned only half of the inheritance received by a son. If there are no sons, then, provided there are two or more daughters, together they receive two thirds of the property; if there is only one daughter she inherits half. Muslim apologists argue that men have a right to inherit double the property or goods allotted to women since men are, after all, the wage earners and family providers with responsibility to meet the needs of the female and needy members of the family.

A woman, on the other hand, has no obligations to meet if she is married.<sup>1</sup>

In practice, however, women in most Muslim communities including Doniq, often do not receive even their entitlements, unless they have no close male relatives or their parents are very wealthy.<sup>2</sup> There has been only one woman in Doniq who has received a house from her father's estate, though she has four brothers. She inherited the property because her father was the village chief and one of the largest proprietors in Doniq. For various reasons, women generally renounce their shares and rights to their brothers. In the first place they have husbands after all to protect and provide for them and they are encouraged to think of their brothers' obligations to their wives and children. Secondly, their brothers (but not the sisters) are supposed to have participated in the earning of all the wealth of the family; land, flocks and household items, and therefore it is not thought fair to transfer them to the household of a man who has taken no trouble over their accumulation. Thirdly, and more importantly, if a woman does not forfeit her rights of inheritance to her brother, she would lose her family ties with her blood-kin in which case the brother will not take on the responsibility which was his father's of protecting and defending his sister; of sending presents for her and her husband and children on the occasion of all the festivals and feasts, of protecting his sister against maltreatment by her husband, sheltering her if she leaves her husband's home and in the event of divorce. If she claims her rights of inheritance her brother will be like a stranger to her and will not interfere with her affairs. Women seemed to have more confidence in their brothers than in their husbands. They said,

1. Quran, 4:11-12; Bevan Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-44; Levy, "An Introduction to the...", *op. cit.*, Vol.I, pp. 138-41 and 205-8; and Sadr, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-60.

2. Bevan Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-4; Vreede-de Stuers, *op. cit.*, p.9; Jeffery, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7; N. Tapper, p. 39; Mohsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 66 and Eglar, *op. cit.*, pp. 45 and 186-99.

"Husbands are powerful and unjust. If we receive our shares from our parents, they might sell the property or transfer it to their own names. Besides, their behaviour isn't to be relied on. They might divorce you any time they feel like it. So, who is going to protect you? A brother never accepts you if you claim your share of inheritance and give it to a strange man."

Women seem to prefer to forfeit their rights of inheritance to their brothers, because brothers, at least, remember them by sending clothing, foodstuffs and other sorts of presents from time to time. They can be certain that their brothers will send them presents when every festival comes around, but if their husbands receive their shares, they will control it to their own advantage. In any case, a woman's Jehez - trousseau - which is presented to her by her guardian at the time of marriage and the impermanent or perishable presents such as clothing and foodstuffs which are sent to her by her father and (after his death) by her brother at every festival and at religious feasts and times of childbirth, are considered her inheritance from her father's estate.

However, since women have no other means of obtaining a livelihood, marriage is considered crucial. The view of marriage as a maintenance source is often betrayed by the words of a parent who chides his daughter who is resisting marriage, or has left her husband's house because of maltreatment and does not want to go back:

'What can you want of marriage apart from enough food and clothes?'

Quite often people will gossip about a prosperous widown who has been left some wealth by her ex-husband, but fancies re-marriage. They may say,

"a woman gets married to be looked after economic-

"ally, so when a widow has been left enough property, why should she remarry?"

A corollary of this view of marriage is the derogatory attitude towards bachelors and spinsters in the community at large. Permanent celibacy is not approved of for men and unthinkable for women, implying that spinsterhood is one of the most damaging social disgraces for a girl. For both men and women being unmarried is considered peculiar, pathetic and contemptible. Moreover, by marriage one achieves adult status, full membership of society and is considered to have developed a mature social personality. It is strongly suggested that those who are not married are immature and irresponsible; and that men and women are not fully adult until they are married and have the responsibility of home and children. Marriage is also considered a religious duty. Islam stresses the superiority of married life to celibacy. The Quran states: "And marry such of you as are solitary..."<sup>1</sup> The Prophet is also reported to have said, 'Marry and establish a family'; 'The most wicked among the dead are the celibates'; 'after Mohammadism there is no greater benefit to men than the possession of a Mussalman wife, who pleases his eyes, obeys him, and in his absence watches faithfully over his honour and his goods'. Therefore, the universality of marriage is also valued from a religious point of view by Doniq people as a Muslim community.<sup>2</sup> The crucial tests which every girl in the village must pass to fulfil the recommendations of Islam and achieve social adulthood and economic status guaranteed by the marriage institution, are her modest behaviour and her virginity. Virginity and having a pure record are transcendent virtues which constitute an investment for girls and which are important reasons for men to consider young girls as prospective wives. For women are considered the

1. Quran, XXIV: 32.

2. Cited in Djamchid A. Momeni, "The Difficulties of changing the age at marriage in Iran", in Journal of Marriage and the Family, (1972), pp. 545-51.



nāmus - 'zeal'- of men and their behaviour is the fundamental source of ābiri - 'honour' and 'reputation'-for them and their families. Ernestine Friedl (1963) noted in her study of a Boeotian community and Abu-Zeid (1965) discovered from research among Egyptian Bedouins that families were not differentiated so much by wealth as by the degree of honour achieved by the behaviour of their women.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, among the villagers of Doniq the attitudes and demeanour of their women are important factors in the ranking of families. It is the woman's behaviour which sets apart an ābiriziz and hayāsiz - 'immodest' and 'shameless'-family from an ābirili and hayāli - 'modest' and 'respectful' one, and which therefore distinguishes a benāmus and beqeyrat - 'zealless' and 'dishonoured'-man from a nāmusli and qeyratli - 'zealous' and reputable one, the former deserving disrespect and hatred and the latter respect and acceptance within the community. If a woman does not observe the rules of 'pardah' or the 'modesty code' properly - does not cover herself in the correct way with her čadırā - 'veil' - when she leaves home, does not look down and turn her eyes away or if she talks and laughs loudly outside her own home or is accosted by a strange man, even if she herself has not made any advance and is innocent, her male relatives are referred to as dishonoured or the men themselves will say, "our honour is exposed", or "is taken away" - ābirimiz geddi, or "our zeal and honour have been insulted and assaulted" - nāmusimiz toxinip - a state of affairs which calls for revenge. For Doniq people, ābiri associated with the behaviour of women is an all or nothing quality. If, by her demeanour, a woman forfeits ābiri, it can never be regained, and the family of the woman is ostracized by the rest of the community for many generations.

1. E. Friedl, "Some Aspects of Dowry and Inheritance in Boeotia", in Pitt Rivers (ed.), Mediterranean Countrymen, (Paris, 1963), pp. 113-135 (133); A.M. Zeid, "Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt", in Peristiany, op. cit., pp. 245-59.

The problem is that ābiri is not lost only when the rules of modesty have been actually violated - that is, when a woman has really had an illicit relationship with a man; it is a matter which goes beyond mere fact. What other people think or suspect without witnessing anything, becomes as important as what actually takes place. For instance, a girl and her family might be considered dishonoured and her opportunities for marriage might be jeopardized for her whole life, if she is seen outside home in a strange street, especially during her period of seclusion immediately after puberty, though she might do nothing at all, or any advance from a man, even if a woman is blameless, is sufficient to dishonour a girl, if the advance is observed or becomes known to others. Hence, boasting by a man, or any accusation or slander - though they be obviously the empty words of a hostile family - reflects on a girl's family's social standing and forms a serious obstacle to her marriage. Or as the villagers put it themselves, it is sufficient to

"make a girl sit by her parents' household oven for ever - hamiṣa tandir qirāḡindā otirār."

As a matter of fact, young girls who are considered marriageable but are still unmarried are more vulnerable to these types of boasting and calumny than married women. The most innocent action on the part of a young girl, in connection with the opposite sex - either something she herself does, or something a man initiates is regarded as a sudden fall for her, and as Antoun notes about Arab village women,

"for now a good becomes converted into evil and purity into defilement."<sup>1</sup>

The village people believe that a girl is like a glass; once it is broken, it can not be repaired. An informant explained why

1. Antoun, op. cit., p. 679.

a certain Doniq girl was still unmarried at seventeen (an age which is considered late for marriage, for a girl). This particular girl had not received any marriage proposals from within the village, and outsiders' proposals had all been withdrawn, because,

"she was seen during her seclusion time in a garden alone with a man (a gardener) who was pouring cucumbers into her skirt. God alone knows whether she had relations with the man, but since she was seen alone buying or getting cucumber from him, everybody in the village said that they were playing with each other and that the man had had a sexual relationship with her. So nobody took her in marriage and her father became an abirısiz man. If anyone from outside the village asked for her in marriage, the village people told him of her position and made him take back his offer."

Another case which happened during my own stay in the village demonstrates even more clearly the vulnerability of young unmarried girls to accusations and slander and how sudden and complete their fall from honour can be. Mohammad, 25 years of age, was fond of his cousin (FBD) who had been living next door and he wanted to marry her. He sent his mother to make his proposal to her, but it was turned down because his 'mother' was actually a step-mother and the girl's parents thought that she might not treat their daughter kindly. One morning the news spread through the village that Mohammad had tried to elope with the girl the previous night but had not succeeded. The boy's step-mother described the event as follows:

"Mohammad's been spending most of his time for nearly the last four months sitting on the roof of our house. I didn't know what he was doing there. It looked as if he wanted to take the girl and run away, but we didn't know for sure."

She continued the story as she heard it from her step-son,

"After he's waited for four months on the roof, at last today the girl comes out to lay the covers of their household's vent. First he throws a stone towards her to get attention, then he gets up to catch hold of her and throw her over the wall into out courtyard, but the girl screams and doesn't give him the chance. Her eldest brother (who was working in the stable) hears her voice and comes hurrying to help her. Mohammad gets frightened and escapes. Of course, he didn't really want to elope with her; he just wanted to touch her in order to make her mīndār - 'polluted' - and prevent anyone from taking her in marriage so that her parents would have to give her for his bride."

However, on the very day the event took place, people of the village reported it to each other and different interpretations were made by different persons. Some said that from any point of view, the honour of the girl's family had been demolished and that the girl had been marked and had become mīndār - 'polluted' - and thus nobody would take her in marriage except the same boy. Some others adopted the story that the boy had kissed the girl and that he had tried to break her hymen with his finger, but he could not do so. Others said that it made no difference,

"a copper object when it is dropped to the ground makes the same sound whether it is broken or not."

Whether or not the boy had done anything to the girl, the results of the episode were the same. The girl had been involved in the episode and the rumours about it had been heard by everybody. Therefore, everything was finished for her and everybody would shun her, socially. If a man from the village apart from Mohammad, should take the girl in marriage, he would be the laughing stock of the people and would be regarded as beqeyrat and dayyus - 'a contented cuckold'.

More important than her modest behaviour or her conduct in the past, a girl's hymen is a crucial element in her marriage



which will prove her modesty and virginity to her husband, establish her in marriage and ensure that his children will be fathered only by him. A girl's hymen, apart from being a proof of her modesty, pre-nuptial chastity and purity and ensuring the legitimacy of children, is, as Paul Vieille points out about Iranian women in general,

"a social obligation that is absolute in the relations between the families and lineages that give and receive the young girl at the moment of marriage... and is also associated profoundly with their honour - which consists of giving and accepting only goods that are ritually pure."<sup>1</sup>

A young girl must be a virgin on her wedding night; if she is discovered to be otherwise, she cannot establish herself as a married woman in an honourable condition and her father, brothers, and all her male kingroup who are responsible for taking care of her from early childhood and for protecting her virginity, will be dishonoured in the village and will all be regarded as disgraced. Similarly the abiri of the family and kin group who have taken her in marriage will be endangered if they accept such used and damaged goods. If the groom's family is unrelated to the bride's family they will certainly give the girl back and claim return of the bāšlix - 'the indirect dower' - which is paid to the girl's father by the boy's family before the consummation of marriage - in addition to all the wedding expenses.<sup>2</sup> When the potential bride and bridegroom are relatives (especially paternal cousins) the girl is not given back, because the honour of boy's side is also involved. In that situation a particular effort is made to prevent the matter from becoming public knowledge because the bride-

1. P. Vieille, "Iranian Women in Family Alliance and Sexual Politics", in Beck and Keddie (eds.) op. cit., pp. 451-72, especially pp. 453-54.

2. Similarly Mahler noted in Ksour (Morocco) that if it is discovered that a girl is not a virgin on her wedding night, the groom sends her back and returns all the marriage gifts; the bride's family forfeits some of these gifts because of the shame they brought on the family of the groom. See V. Mahler, Women and Property in Morocco, (Cambridge, 1974), p.179; cf. her article, "Women and social change in Morocco" in Beck and Keddie (eds.) op. cit., pp. 100-23.

groom and his family would also be dishonoured for being incapable of protecting the bride's virginity. However, even among relatives, the family of the girl returns the bāšlix and deducts something from her kabin - 'mahr'—so that the girl will be accepted. The reason the marriage gifts are taken back when a girl is discovered not to be a virgin is that in the contract of marriage a girl's virginity is an important factor in determining and fixing the amount of her bāšlix and mahr. Certainly a virgin girl is more expensive than a non-virgin. It is not very rare for Doniq people to say that

"virginity is a girl's capital and value and one pays a lot to get an üzi bağli qiz - a 'virgin girl'."

Therefore if a girl is found 'used' and 'damaged' on her wedding night, she must either be given back or kept, only on the condition that something must be deducted from her price, in order to compensate for her defects.

The virginity test is, of course, a much publicized practice in Doniq just as it is in many other Muslim communities. In addition to the parties directly concerned (the families of the bride and bridegroom), many non-related families should also witness the evidence of virginity so that they can establish local confidence in the honour of the family groups. Therefore, when the wedding dinner has been served and finished, all invited women friends and close and distant female relatives gather in a separate room near the room where the marriage is consummated to witness the results of the marriage test immediately after the wedding. It is believed that if proof of virginity is not made public on the very night of the wedding, something is certainly wrong with the bride or a trick has been played.

Before the bride is taken to the bridegroom's house, one of her very close relatives, usually her paternal aunt, is selected by

her parents as her Yenga - to supervise the consummation of her marriage. The Yenga must be a close relative preferably from the bride's father's side of the family who is interested in her responsibility and proud of her task because her own family honour is involved in this ceremony of the hymen. A strange woman who has no interest in the honour of the bride, cannot be trusted. People told me that if a strange woman is chosen as Yenga, she might be found to have bargained with the bridegroom's family and hidden proof of the girl's virginity in order to bring shame to the girl's family and compensate for some grievance. However the conscience of a relative of the girl does not allow her to cheat in doing her task particularly when her own honour and that of her male kinfolk is implicated. In addition, a divorced or barren woman cannot be a Yenga. It is believed that since the bride is accompanied by the Yenga to her wedding chamber and her marriage bed is spread by her, barrenness in the Yenga would bring infertility to the bride, and a Yenga who was divorced, would bring a similar fate for the newly-wed young woman. It is important for the Yenga to be a middle-aged woman (rather than very old) in order to be active and alert enough to keep her eyes open for the tricks which possibly take place on the wedding night. There are all sorts of tricks which might be played on the wedding night. A bridegroom's family might purposely hide the proof of virginity, pretending that the girl was not a virgin, in order to dishonour her family and take revenge for some action by members of the bride's family which has not pleased them during the engagement or for some unpleasantness met with in the working out of the bride's marriage settlement, or simply in order to obtain money from the girl's father. The following case will serve as an illustration. When Ārāstā was married it was rumoured that she was not a virgin on her wedding night. She was still ridiculed and taunted by people fifteen years later. Women reminded her and her relatives of it whenever they had a quarrel with them. The rumour resulted in great shame for Ārāstā and her relatives and was never

forgotten. Ārāstā's sister who was very angry with the attitude taken by the people, said,

"My sister was a virgin and it was proved to people later, but they never forgot the gossip. God should curse the person who has caused us this shame. My eldest brother is a very stubborn man. He likes his words to be listened to and his wishes carried out at all costs. My sister's in-laws refused to hand over her 'mahr' and wedding articles in exact accordance with what was contracted in her dānišix - 'marriage contract'. My brother felt very angry and sent the articles back with a message saying that until the contracted amount was met, the girl wouldn't be taken out of his house. Her in-laws were upset by this. They did what my brother asked, but promised that they would get even for his action. We didn't realize what exactly they intended to do. When my sister was kūrakan - 'deflowered' - the bridegroom, as he was instructed beforehand, took the proof of virginity and hid it, telling the people that she was a puč - 'lacking a hymen'. She was given back, but since we had confidence in our girl we followed up on the matter. We took Ārāstā to the midwife and the midwife certified that the girl had been recently deflowered. So all the men in my kin-group went to the bridegroom's house armed with knives, asking for the virginity evidence... After a big quarrel, the boy's family brought out the proof and gave it to us, taking the girl back... In doing all this they brought shame on themselves... but people still don't believe the truth and always make spiteful remarks at us."

Obviously, to avoid this sort of trick, a Yenga must be very much on the alert. The Yenga usually makes up the wedding bed, attaching a white cloth sent by the bride's family (who choose a cloth with a special pattern, size and quality, which will help them to recognize any possible trick) to the middle of the mattress. She accompanies the bride and bridegroom to their room, giving the right hand of the bride to the right hand of the bridegroom, and leaves the wedding room. But instead of waiting in the room where the other relatives also wait to witness the proof of virginity, the Yenga sits behind the door of the wedding room, listening carefully. She should



supervise the consummation of the marriage as well as taking good care lest a trick might be played. If the bride refuses or if the couple talk for longer than usual, the Yenga bursts into the room, advising the bride and groom that 'people are waiting outside; hurry up! Do you want to disgrace us in the village?' Every ten or fifteen minutes she knocks on the door asking for the proof. An informant who was recently herself the Yenga of her brother's daughter said:

"I waited for half an hour without interfering, but there was no sign of anything going on at all. Finally I went in to see what was going on. I saw the girl sitting naked in a corner, crying and not giving any encouragement to the boy. I slapped the girl's face a few times and gave a few thumps to her back with my fists and left the room. A short time later the boy knocked on the door and delivered the cloth."

The female relatives who wait in another room are mostly women who are past their menopause. The younger and middle aged women wait less often on the wedding night, because it is thought that if a bride is not a virgin on that time, the bridegroom's male relatives might sexually assault them in order to take revenge for being cheated and given a "used", non-virgin bride. When the stained white cloth is delivered to the Yenga from the wedding room, it is carried with wild rejoicing and cries of joy to the middle of the group of women waiting in the other room so that they can witness it and discuss whether it is a genuine stain or a fraudulent one. After it is approved by the women it is taken to the bride's parents' house to be witnessed and proved by people waiting there to see it as well as to give encouragement to her parents who wait worried and embarrassed in their own home. After the proof has been displayed to the relatives of both bride and groom, it is also shown to some un-related families of the village as a precaution against possible gossip by these people.

Because of the strictness of the pardah system with its segregation of the sexes, in the last fifty years there have been only four women, as an old woman claimed, who were not virgins on their wedding nights, and of these women none was proved to have lost her virginity as a result of an illicit relationship. Their hymens are believed to have been violated by objects rather than sexual activities. One of these girls ruptured her hymen with some object. This had happened seven years before and everybody in the village learned about it with the result that no one would marry the girl until her parents managed to arrange a match with someone from another village. When she was to be carried to her in-laws' household, she took with her a bottle filled with the blood of a chicken, having been shown how to pour it onto the cloth without the boy noticing it. She succeeded and nobody from the groom's village detected the trick. Another of the four non-virgin girls was reported to be "congenitally hymenless" - puč. Village people believe that it is written in the Quran that among forty girls one is always puč and need not be punished. The final two non-virgin girls were said to have lost their virginity because of some improper games which should not be played by girls, such as jumping over a high object, or climbing a tree or wall.

These justifications of the non-virgin girls had not been made easily or straight-forwardly. When a girl is not found to be a virgin on her wedding night, her own relatives are by no means easily satisfied that she has not committed fornication. The male members of the girl's family beat her up, torture her for many days on end, keep her hungry, and put her to hard work until they get a confession from the girl herself as to whether or not she has had a sexual relationship. She is also taken to the midwife, and finally the girl's own confession, with the addition of the midwife's certificate and the Quranic advice are weighed with the record of the girl before her marriage - that is whether or not she has been a modest girl before marriage and has observed the modesty code and rules of

seclusion according to the ideals accepted by the people. After all these investigations and examinations, it is finally decided whether she has had sexual relations or not. In the case of her not having been involved in an illicit relationship, she might be taken back by her in-laws, though she will then lead a different and very hard life. An informant reported that Adelah was one of those girls - proved to have lost her hymen through activities other than sexual.

"She was accepted by her husband and in-laws, but lead a hard life for a long time. She was regarded by her in-laws as their maidservant. They kept her like a beggar; she always wore a tattered dress and veil, was quite often beaten very badly and made to work very hard. Her husband refused to have sexual relations with her for a while and didn't regard her as his wife at all. Usually, he wouldn't allow her to go out and whenever she was allowed out, he followed her, because he was still suspicious of her... finally the woman's mother and other female relatives managed to change her husband and his family's behaviour towards her by witchcraft and prayer..."

However if a girl is proved to have had sexual relations, the story is completely different. The groom (if he is not a relative) gives the bride back as described previously and recovers all his expenses, but in the case of a relative, the groom and the girl's own brothers and father and other male members of the kingroup go about taking revenge. Sexual relations outside the marriage context is unacceptable under any circumstances and brings unbearable disgrace and shame to families who, in order to erase the ar - 'shame' - to some extent and to be able to go on living in the community, have to take revenge. Since men are the possessors of abiri and qeyrat - 'honour' and 'zeal' - the responsibility of protection and retaliation, in case of offences against abiri, falls on their shoulders. The penalties and sanctions for violation of the norms surrounding abiri and qeyrat are very severe and powerful and often include death for both parties - the woman and her seducer - at

the hand of the woman's guardians. Although I observed no case directly, my informants affirmed that the girl is certainly killed and her seducer is either killed or one of his virgin female relatives is sexually assaulted. If no measure of revenge is taken by the seduced woman's male relatives, the latter are teased by the whole community and are referred to as beqeyrat and dayyus - contented cuckolds.<sup>1</sup>

Antoun reports from Kufra-al-Ma (a village in Jordan) that in instances of the violation of the codes of modesty and of sexual behaviour, harsh penalties allowed by local custom are now seen to endanger too many social relationships, and therefore the male kin of the woman often seek more prudent solutions - that is elopement, marriage, or even denial or hushing up of the breach of propriety and the compensation. If these solutions fail and the event becomes known publicly, the outcome will be severe punishment (death).<sup>2</sup>

In Doniq, even if the girl's male kin might be inclined to seek one of these solutions, the pressure put on them by other villagers and the very nature of daily life compel them to punish the girl and take revenge. In the case described on the previous pages concerning Mohammad and his cousin, because they were very close relatives, the girl's father and brothers could not regard the matter as cause for a family feud. However the girl's male relatives refused to give her to her cousin in marriage; though this would have been an obvious way of erasing

1. Mocking a man and referring to him as dayyus in the case of his womenfolk's violation of modesty codes is a practice that has been observed in many societies. Campbell reports from Sarakatsani that by adultery a woman makes her husband a cuckold, "or one who wears a horn". "She puts a horn on him", it is said. The implication that the cuckold wears a horn, Campbell points out, "may be an ironical allusion to the sexual potency which his wife's action suggests he doesn't possess". Similar situation have been noted in other Mediterranean and Middle Eastern communities. Cf. Campbell, op. cit., p. 152; Pitt Rivers, "Honour and Social Status", in Peristiany (ed.) op. cit., pp. 21-77, especially p. 46; Fuller, op. cit., p. 69; Denich, op. cit., p. 255; and Antoun, op. cit., p. 678.

2. Antoun, op. cit., p. 694.



the shame of the whole lineage. The girl's father later told me that,

"The boy has assaulted my nāmus and his own nāmus as well and has taken away the honour of whole Tira. He hasn't got qeyrat - 'zeal'. If he had zeal, he would have protected his own nāmus rather than assaulting it. So I would rather cut my daughter into pieces and give the pieces to a dog to eat, than see her become the bride of such a beqeyrat man who doesn't consider his own honour."

On the whole, for the girl's family to keep silent and take no action against the boy, did not seem to satisfy the village people or to be acceptable to them. People repeatedly addressed the girl's brothers and father as beqeyrat and benāmus. They said that the girl's brother should have killed the boy or at least beaten him up so that he would have been laid up in bed for months. Eventually people encouraged her brother to promise to kill his cousin. The girl's other male relatives also sent the boy a message threatening severe punishment, after which the boy left the village for Tehran and never came back.

In Mediterranean societies, the protection of abiri associated with the behaviour and sexual activities of a woman is transferred after marriage from her father and brother to her husband and his kingroup. After marriage a woman is considered to be the honour and prestige of her husband alone; and with his own male relatives make up the only group with whom resides the responsibility for protecting the purity of the woman. A woman's behaviour after marriage has no connection with the honour of her natal family and thus the men among her own blood kin have no responsibility to protect her or to make amends when something shameful happens to her.<sup>1</sup>

1. Schneider, op. cit., p.21.

However, among the people of Doniq, immodest behaviour on the part of a woman after marriage threatens the reputation both of her father's clan and of her husband's family group and both are responsible for recovering this reputation. Because marriage transfers a woman's sexual and genetical rights from her father to her husband, she becomes incorporated into the prestige structure of her husband's kingroup. However, since she retains economic rights in her father's house by local custom and can claim a share in the inheritance of her father's estate according to Islamic law (though as it will be seen later, these rights are often overridden), a woman does not break off her links with her blood kin and remains a part of the prestige structure of her father's family group.

If at the time she is accused of immoral behaviour, a woman has not produced children to continue her husband's line, her husband may want to initiate divorce proceedings, recover payment of mahr, and leave the punishment of his wife and appropriate acts of revenge against her seducer to her brothers and other male relatives. However, after a woman has borne his children, a husband must share with his wife's male kin in the attempt to recover the honour of his own family group and of his children, because his wife's immorality reflects on his manliness and his children's prestige. A case occurred seven years ago which was described to me by the victim's sister-in-law (HBW). She said,

"My younger sister-in-law was divorced seven years ago because of gossip. My brother-in-law (HB) was first engaged to his cousin (FZD) before marrying the woman he later divorced. One day he saw his fiancée outside her home during her seclusion time buying something from a čarči - pedlar. That was all. He came home and said that he didn't want her anymore... Anyway we married him to the kad-xudā's (the village leader) daughter. They were quite happy. During the second year of their marriage, his wife (Xadija) went to fetch something from her parent's house. She stood at the doorstep and called to her mother, but nobody answered.

"There was nobody in. When she went in to fetch the thing, she saw one of her father's servants working in the stable. As soon as she went in, she heard a voice from the roof of the house shouting, 'look, everybody, Xadija and bāyram (the servant) are doing something in the stable!' All the neighbours were drawn by the voice to see what had happened. They saw my sister-in-law and the servant alone in the household. The one who shouted, was the mother of my brother-in-law's first fiancée who wanted to take revenge because he had given her daughter back... Immediately the news reached my brother-in-law who was working in the field. He said that his back had been broken. He came home and got a knife to kill himself, but the village people gathered round and didn't let him... Although the girl later cried and swore by God and the Quran that she hadn't done anything with the servant, her confession was not believed... My brother-in-law divorced her. After she had sworn by the Quran, he wanted to take her back, but because of people's gossip and talk he couldn't do that. One day when he was arguing with a man in the field about something, the man called him Taza dayyus - a 'New cuckold'. From that moment he refused to take her back."

She continued,

"You know, if she'd had any children, my brother-in-law would have killed both her and the servant. But since she had no children, he gave her back and left it to her brothers to do with her and the servant whatever they saw fit to do... Her father and brother were beqeyrat, who didn't say anything to the woman, but they got together with her cousins and other male relatives to go and kill the boy. The servant's mother, who was a very old woman, hid her son in the household oven, but they tortured her, beat her up, and took her trousers off and 'raped' her with a stick... and finally found the boy. They tried to beat the boy to death, but he didn't die... The mother and boy finally emigrated from the village. When they were leaving the village, the boy swore by the Quran that he had always considered Xadija as his sister and had never done anything to her..."

In short, among the villagers of Doniq, the concepts of 'honour' and 'shame' are the characteristics and attributes of both

an individual and a group. A man has abiri - 'honour', but it is in large part a reflection of the ābiri of his family and lineage. When an illicit relationship takes place, all the male relatives - agnatic and affinal - are involved in trying to restore the honour of the group.

According to anthropological evidence from most parts of the world, especially Muslim communities including Doniq, when the modesty code is violated, women seem to be held more responsible than men and punished more stringently. It is women who are frequently reported to be drowned, stoned, starved to death, tied naked to a tree and beaten to death, poisoned, or stripped, and their noses and tongues cut into pieces by their husbands, fathers and brothers who have the legal right to do in order to protect and recover their 'honour'.<sup>1</sup> In Islam those who show immodest behaviour or have extra-marital sexual relationship are recommended for severe punishment, provided the charges can be substantiated. The accuser, whether woman or man, should provide four witnesses, or else swear four times by God that his accusations are true. When the evidence is proved, the Quran says,

"Scourge each one of the parties - (both the woman and the man committing fornication) with a hundred stripes or stone them."<sup>2</sup>

However in most Muslim communities this punishment is generally carried out only on women and it is the women who pay more than the men for their errors. One reason suggested by the people of the communities is their belief about the nature

1. Campbell, op. cit., p. 152; Denich, op. cit., p. 254; Friedl, "Appearance and reality...", op. cit., pp. 98-108; Paul, op. cit., p. 283; Antoun, op. cit., p. 677; Mahler, op. cit., p. 169; R.J. Coughlin, "The position of women in Vietnam", in Apporadi, op. cit., p. 140; Arasteh, op. cit., p. 113; N. Yapper, op. cit., pp. 34-5; and Abu-Zeid, op. cit., pp. 256-57.

2. Quran, 24:1; and R. Levy, The Social Structure of Islam, second edition, (Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 119-20.



of women. Women, they think, are naturally driven by inordinate and animalistic sexuality and thus they are the ones who attract the men and are willing to have sexual relationship with every man. For instance, Fuller notes of a Lebanese village that

"Women's propensity for sexual license is attributed to the animalistic license that moves them. They seek out men like locusts after corn."<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, the women in Doniq are believed to be naturally modest, pure and noble and it is the men who are considered to be naturally highly sexed and are always lusting after the opposite sex - kişini gözi hamişa dāğınix olār. Nevertheless, as in other societies, Doniq women are usually the victims of traditional forms of justice, and take the blame for sexual law-breaking. They are regarded as a threat to the family group and its honour, and are restricted and punished severely when the morality of the society is endangered. For it is believed that although men are naturally endowed with unlimited sexual desire and lust, they are also naturally wise enough to combat it, feeling responsibility towards the honour of families. If a woman does not encourage him - Düva göz elamasa ökuz ātilmāz, a man does not make advances.

In short, the modesty of a community's women and more specifically virginity, is vital to the whole social organization. It protects the dignity and reputation of its families and family groups, and forms an important element in the cohesion and union of families and in the establishment of marriages which are the main source of economic and social status for these people, and the violation of this prized purity disrupts the entire social order. Thus the whole society makes use of the means pro-

1. Fuller, op. cit., p. 47; cf. Gordon, op. cit., p. 13; and Schneider, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

vided by various cultural, religious and structural conventions and forces to safeguard the order of the society, and, more importantly, to guarantee the marriage of their offspring.

#### How a girl becomes marriageable:

Protecting the hymen of their daughter is the chief concern of parents in the course of bringing her up. From early childhood (4-5) the segregation of sexes is imposed on children; girls are separated from boys in the kinds of games they may play and where they may go to play.<sup>1</sup> Little girls are asked to concentrate their play in their own homes or courtyards, or at most not far from the front of their gateways, but it is not important for boys to limit their choice of places to play. When little girls play with their little brothers or other male relatives, the mothers constantly drop their work and check to make sure what the girls are doing and if they are playing the same games as their brothers. Girls are not allowed to climb trees, walls or any other high place or to jump over anything energetically. It is believed that the hymen contains a liquid and that it may run out if a girl jumps over a high object. Girls are also not allowed to play with or ride a humped object. Mothers try to make their daughters understand by every possible means that something very valuable is embedded in their bodies and they have to look after it very carefully. If it is lost, their lives are lost. From early childhood, girls are instructed by older women as to which places are proper for them to go and which are not, though they might be suitable for boys; which games are for them and which are for boys. If she is quick and intelligent enough a girl wants to be told the reason for these restrictions. Some mothers answer their daughters directly that they have to take care of their virginity, but the meaning and the purpose of virginity is not clear to the

1. See Farhat, Qam Maqam, Āzādi Yā Esarat-e Zan, (Tehran, 2535 Šāhanšāhi), pp. 254-57.

girls, perhaps they are just children. On the other hand, some mothers consider it imprudent to give their daughters direct answers about the reason for their restrictions or to explain to them the importance of their bodies, fearing that the girls might become vulgar and immodest. These mothers simply tell their daughters that a girl is different from a boy and must not live like a boy.

Clearly, the 'pardah system' partially imposed on little girls until they reach puberty is much more emphasized after puberty. For girls before or after puberty, the outside world is a threatening place and girls are protected from it by the safety of a high four-walled courtyard with a gateway which is always kept closed and locked. Although relations between the sexes are very restricted and there is no possibility of a casual relationship being set up with someone of the opposite sex, parents always worry about rape and premarital relationships or possible slanders which might be brought about intentionally, as already suggested, by one's enemies in order to demolish a family's reputation and endanger a girl's marriage opportunities. However, little girls might be sent to fetch water from the spring which is a public place and is not out of bounds to them, but if they fancy paying a visit to one of their relatives, for instance, living in another street a distance away, they are chaperoned by their mothers or by older brothers. Mothers accompany the little girls and hand them over to the relatives, asking them to take good care of the girls and not let them go out of the house or leave them alone in a room with only a male relative. Little girls are often forbidden to carry messages to or borrow anything from a strange household, even within their own neighbourhood, tasks which are usually performed by their little brothers. Mothers often said to me,

"The boys have nothing (virginity) to worry about.  
You can send them to live alone anywhere, even

"over the mountains. But a girl is a problem. She might go to a strange household where there might not be anyone around but a man. If he took hold of her and did bad things to her, what would we do?"

The outdoor activities and freedom of movements of girls are more restricted as they grow up. While a boy gains more liberty to move about as he grows older, the spatial freedom allotted to a growing girl becomes more circumscribed. Unlike a girl, a boy is teased if he is found to linger a bit longer than normal in the household, being referred to as 'modest' like a girl and he is forced to go out to play and to mix with other boys. When girls arrive at ten or twelve years of age, they are forced to stay at home in seclusion until the time comes for their marriage. If they have younger sisters, the latter substitute for them in doing outside jobs; otherwise their mothers take up the responsibility. Sometimes even the men, although it may be considered shameful for them to carry out jobs which are specific to women, nevertheless take over such tasks as fetching water, fuel and so on, in order to prevent the adolescent or grown up girls from leaving home. If a girl attends school, she should leave as soon as she arrives at puberty. In short, after ten if a girl wants to be considered by village people as 'modest' which will in turn safeguard her chances of marriage, she should absolutely avoid being observed outside home.<sup>1</sup> A girl who is seen outside home during her time of seclusion, is called by people a sūlayan qānjix - 'a vagrant bitch' - who is always wandering about the village to find someone of the opposite sex, and her parents are sent messages by people warning them to stop the girl from coming out. There have been only two girls in Doniq aged 12-13 who continued their studies after the age of seclusion, because their fathers were educated and wanted them to be educated

1. Similar restrictions are imposed on the movements of young girls in the Hindu community in India. See Papanek, op. cit., p. 302.



too, at least up to the end of the fifth grade; but people teased their parents and blamed them for breaking with the custom of the village. The strict seclusion of girls after puberty, apart from safeguarding their modesty and marriage, is, as Fuller notes of a village in Lebanon, to protect the morality of the society. For the growing girl is believed to have

"the power to disrupt society as a temptation to men. The adolescent girl has come to sexual maturity but this maturity has not yet been institutionalized. Herein lies the girl's disruptive force. No longer a child nor yet a married woman she stands in a precarious position."<sup>1</sup>

Since the male members of households are away from home working in the field or in the town, the younger girls are entrusted to the older female relatives to be watched over carefully lest they should leave home. Older women often reported that their male relatives had sworn that if someone reported to them that he had seen their marriageable daughters or sisters outside home they would break the girls' feet and those of the older ones. A middle aged woman said,

"If I send my 12 year old daughter once a year to visit her grandparents who live not far away, her father immediately notices it and quarrels with me and beats her up."

The young unmarried girls are allowed to attend the mosque only once a year during the special religious month - 'Moharram' when it is the religious obligation of every one, irrespective of age, to attend the mosque. They are strictly covered with their čādīrā - 'veil'—and chaperoned by their mothers, passing stealthily through the side streets to the mosque. There are also some advantages for girls who have very close relatives (uncles or aunts) living in a very nearby locality. The

1. Fuller, op. cit., pp. 51-2; cf. Coughlin, op. cit., pp. 134-35.

girls may sometimes drop in on these relatives by going to their homes not through the lanes, but over the roofs of the household, in order to avoid being seen publicly. Of course this kind of socializing may take place only when there are no grown-up 'permitted in marriage' - nā-mahram boys in the relatives' household.

The restriction and seclusion of unmarried girls is not only practised in relation to the outside world and to strange men, but is observed inside the household and in relation to male relatives as well. When an adolescent brother and sister are alone in a room, the older female relatives repeatedly drop their work to check on them, believing that,

"They are young and silly and know nothing about the world. They might bring shame on each other."

On the whole, whereas a young girl maintains *pardah* in the sense of keeping a respectful distance from all older men with the forbidden degrees (mahram - prohibited in marriage; father, brother and brothers' descendants, maternal and paternal uncles), *pardah* changes its sense of respect into the sense of 'avoiding shame' and becomes more restraining when a young unmarried girl comes into contact with any male relatives who are not included in the forbidden category (nā-mahram - permitted in marriage; maternal and paternal cousins and their descendants). When a cousin, for instance, comes to visit his uncle or aunt, his marriageable cousin either leaves the room and hides herself in a separate room, or if her parents are present she might stay in the room, covering her body and face with her veil, and keeping quiet and sitting with her back to the visitor. Since these men are potential marriage partners, a girl is expected to cover her face in their presence and entertain such men as visitors. The same relationship is common between older married cousins. Many young women told me that before their marriages they were never allowed to meet

their cousins and could not even recognize them. An older female relative usually chaperons a younger secluded woman inside the household as well as outside. She is never left alone at home, lest a man should break in and bring shame to her.

Another tactic which is widely used in Doniq to bring up a girl chaste and marriageable and to protect her modesty, is suppression of her knowledge about sex. It is believed that if a girl learns and understands about sex, she loses her morality and haya - 'modesty'—and it becomes very difficult to control her if her marriage is slightly late. However, seclusion of girls at home after 10, apart from keeping them intact and safeguarding their modesty, prevents them from contacting outsiders and learning, as an informant put it, "bad, bad things - love, sex and marriage". A mother or other older female relatives who are responsible for bringing younger women up to be chaste, ignorant and marriageable, try to prevent these girls from meeting older female visitors who might refer to anything about sexuality. When an older female visitor arrives the mothers make their daughters leave the room, or if they stay in the room, they are very careful not to refer to anything associated with the conjugal relationship, pregnancy, menstruation and so on. Girls are not taken to marriage ceremonies particularly the actual weddings. These occasions are considered unsuitable because married women might talk about something which would poison the minds of unmarried girls. Young girls are also made to leave a room where child-birth is taking place. Although parents do not have a separate bedroom and have to sleep with all the family members in the same room, they never sleep in the same bed in front of their children.

Furthermore, there is no possibility for girls to receive formal sex education.<sup>1</sup> In general, school and education are believed

1. Similar conditions with respect to keeping young unmarried girls innocent to ensure that they will remain chaste and marriageable, have been noted by Jeffery in the community of Pirzada in India. See Jeffery, op. cit., p. 75.

to make girl children impertinent and immodest. The village mulla - religious leader - has taught the people that in Islam education is prohibited for females. If a girl is educated she will lose her moral purity, write love letters and stop obeying her father and her husband. Even if a girl attends school for two or three years, she will find that sex problems must not be discussed in the school. Many married middle aged women told me that when they menstruated for the first time, it came to them as a shock. They thought that they had lost their virginity and, feeling ashamed and embarrassed, could not talk to anyone about the problem, and so suffered considerably as a result. The only teaching about sexuality for a girl might take place two or three days before her wedding, when she is accompanied by her female kin to take the wedding bath - galin hāmāmi in the town's public baths. The older women accompanying her will tell her about the consummation of a marriage. Sometimes a young girl is not told anything at all about the physical aspects of the wedding until a few minutes before she is led to her wedding room. A fourteen year old girl who had been married for three months said,

"I didn't know anything about marriage until I was being sent to the wedding room. My older married sister told me what the boy would do to me. I was frightened and shaking, refusing to enter the room. I was very, very frightened of the boy, putting my hands over my eyes, sitting in a corner, crying and sweating as if I had taken a bath..."

Another informant who had been married for a year said,

"I didn't know anything about the wedding at all, and the women didn't tell me anything about it either. When some guests left after the dinner had been served, I understood from the way the women behaved and their whispering to each other that it was something to do with me. Immediately after that, the Yenga threw me into the wedding room and locked the door firmly, and then the boy was brought in. The boy had been told by his female relatives to hurry up, so shortly after entering



"the room he threw me to the ground and took my clothes off. I swear by God, I didn't know what he was going to do. I was trembling and so frightened that I fainted. After a while, when I came to myself I heard women knocking at the door and asking for the proof."

Women said that the fact that they had been kept so unaware and ignorant about conjugal relationships and had been so frightened on the wedding night, had made them disgusted by the sexual act ever since. They said that they knew many of their relatives and friends who always received beatings from their husbands because they hated to have sex. The practice of keeping secret and mysterious the processes of menstruation, intercourse and childbirth is associated with a sense of propriety of keeping girls innocent and protecting their modesty and contributes also, as Lois Paul notes about San Pedro ( a settlement on the shores of Lake Atitlan in the South Western highlands of Guatemala) to the powerlessness of younger women in face of older ones and assures the ascendancy of men over women and male domination in sexual relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from being responsible for bringing young girls up to be chaste and ābirili - 'modest' (which are the main characteristics young girls need to be considered marriageable), older women are also responsible for instructing the younger women in the 'modesty codes for respect' which are also elements which bear crucially on the choice of a girl for marriage and her proper establishment in her in-laws' household.

A girl is considered hayāli and ehtirāmni - 'modest and respectful'-and thus ideal for marriage if she never puts aside her ṣādīrā even inside the house in front of her older male and female relatives. When a young girl is alone with her mother she might cover her head and hair with the ṣārqaḍ - 'scarf'- as a sign of respect, but as soon as another older woman -

1. Paul, op. cit., pp. 297-98.

such as a neighbour, friend or relative - or older male kin - father, older brothers, uncles and so forth - arrive, she wears her veil and covers most of the top half of her body. An older woman made a bitter complaint about a mother who seemed not to have taught her young marriageable daughter to respect older people properly. She said,

"I don't know which unlucky fellow will marry her. She is a shameless girl, always coming up to older people without pulling her čādirā at least over her breasts, and moves them brazenly up and down as if God had created no shame in the girl. That's her mother's fault. Her mother should say to her that it is not decent behaviour. I always teach Xadija (her daughter) to move gently when she walks in front of older people and hide her body properly."

A modest young girl does not show respect to older men and women merely by covering her body; in her demeanour too she should emphasize her respect for them. In the past, when an older woman visited a house, the unmarried women used to leave the room and hide themselves, but nowadays they do not leave the room, but stay and busy themselves with their work. However it is expected that they should be completely passive in front of the visitor as a sign of respect. An unmarried girl never takes part in older women's conversation. She sits quietly in a corner casting her eyes down, though sometimes looking at the visitor stealthily. When she is asked a question, she either does not answer, which is taken as being the modest and respectful response or answers only with a brief "Yes" or "No", while blushing and getting embarrassed. To be considered hayāl-i and assure her marriage, a girl must not talk, laugh, chew gum or eat anything in front of older people especially strange ones. These are rules which are often heard being instructed by mothers to their daughters. When a little girl talks to her mother when they are alone, she is repeatedly interrupted by her mother who tells her that "girls shouldn't talk so much" or "it is very bad for girls to talk at all".

Older women believe that the younger women should be instructed from early childhood to behave modestly, otherwise when they grow up, they will not be able to adjust themselves to behaving modestly and properly, in their husbands' households. Within the family circle, as a sign of respect to their older male kin the young girls' activities become ever more restricted. They conceal themselves behind the ḥādirā, stand up when the men enter the room and do not sit down until they are given permission. They are more reserved in conversation with male kin than with female - they never initiate a discussion and they respond to the men in low tones and obey quietly. It is very unusual to see a young girl disobey or disagree with her father or brothers.<sup>1</sup> Girls should never be seen by their older male relatives combing their hair or otherwise grooming themselves. An old male informant said,

"Girls in the city, especially the educated ones, never understand what 'modesty' and 'respect' means. The comb is always in their hands, even in front of their fathers! My eldest brother's daughter is a teacher. She combs her hair and wears make-up in front of her father as if he is not a father and doesn't need respect. Such and such a person, may your house be destroyed, let your father leave the house, and then comb your hair whenever you wish."

All the elements of modesty observed on the part of unmarried women by way of showing respect towards older people are checked and taken into consideration very carefully by their male and female relatives, neighbours and friends in order to differentiate between a hayālī - 'modest' - and hayāsiz - 'immodest' and 'shameless' one and choose an appropriate girl as their daughter or sister-in-law.

A young girl tolerates incredibly strict restrictions on her movements as a means of becoming marriageable. The restrictions,

1. Cf. Jeffery, op. cit., pp. 99-104.

briefly, include severe segregation from the opposite sex, separation from the outside world and total confinement to home after puberty until the time of her marriage. They also mean that her sex instinct is stifled by the suppression of information on the subject. In a word, her up-bringing is in such a passive style, all in the name of modesty, obedience and respect, that one wonders how she ever finds herself established as a married woman.

#### Arrangement of marriage:

Clearly older people play a dominant role in organizing the marriages of younger ones. It is considered the duty of parents to settle their children in marriage, especially in an appropriate match. Parents whose children are not married at the proper age are regarded as negligent and incapable in the performance of their duties. If a girl is not married by her early teenage years (13-15) it reflects badly on the status and prestige of her family and herself. There is the danger that if she is still unmarried at 15 or 16 no one will choose her at all - or at least the chances of a suitable marriage are diminished for her. People assume that she might lack the qualities desired in a wife and something is wrong with her if by that age no one has made a proposal to her. Therefore, parents feel increased responsibility and are more concerned about her marriage. They make a big effort on her behalf, taking advantage of every available opportunity to draw attention to her existence and secure a husband for her under any circumstances. A father who has many daughters is under a heavier responsibility than one who has only a few daughters. Sometimes, although it is considered shameful for the girl's side to initiate a marriage proposal, the father who is burdened by many daughters suggests to one of his relatives or friends that if he asks one of his daughters in marriage for his son, he will give a piece of land to his son or will consider his economic position favourably in the drawing up of the marriage settle-



ments - dower, dowry and wedding expenses. Or quite often a father makes an effort to secure a husband for his daughter while using her for his own political and economic ends. Many cases of this kind have been reported in Doniq. Here is one such case.

Mohammad Ali, who had six daughters, asked one of his relatives to help him in the field for two years in exchange for one of his daughters whom the boy was somewhat fond of. One day, after the boy had worked on Mohammad Ali's land for two years and the time when he ought to receive the girl was drawing close, the girl's father asked the boy,

"Mohammad, tell me, if one wants to beat his wife, what should he do?"

Mohammad answered,

"One should first shave her hair, rub some yoghurt on her head, then beat her with a stick and throw her into the stable to stay with the animals for a few days."

From that moment the girl's father refused to give her to Mohammad. When Mohammad heard about the refusal he attacked the girl's father in an attempt to kill him with a knife. Later on people reported that the question was, in fact, an excuse for the father not to give the girl to Mohammad, because he had received a better proposal for his daughter. In another case which occurred recently: Hāji Mohammad Hüseyn had promised his sixteen year old daughter to Hāji Qurbān's 14 year old son two years previously in exchange for receiving wheat and fodder from the boy's father for two years. After receiving the wheat and fodder, the girl's father's older male kingroup did not consider it advisable to hand over a sixteen year old girl as a bride of a boy who was younger than the girl. As a result the girl's father went back on his promise. But the

boy's father and a group of male relatives made an armed attack on the girl's house, claiming either custody of the girl or the life of one of her brothers. Finally three months later the girl's father was compelled to hand over the girl.

Sometimes, the men cooperate in arranging their children's marriages to strengthen established friendly relationships with each other as well as to settle their children in marriage. Some women reported that in the marriage of their daughters, their husbands had come home and said that they had given the girls in marriage and everything was settled. Although older women have no such authority to join together in arranging their children's marriages, they do have their part to play in the proceedings. With the permission of their menfolk they may also play indirect roles in the marriages of their children. The roles are called in local language bāzār or el'ci qizdirmāx - 'attracting customers to the market'. From the early teenage years of young people mothers or other older female relatives - married sisters, aunts and the like, sing the praises of the excellent behaviour and other good qualities of their children. A mother seizes every opportunity in the guest houses or mosque to let people know that her daughter is very clever, hard-working, modest, very obedient and refuses to step out even if her parents allow her to do so, or that her son is very kind, generous, and spends lavishly on his mother and sisters. It is believed that anyone who has a vast number of older married female kin will be able to get married at an early age and settled in a suitable place, for the more women relatives there are, the better a girl's virtues will be advertized. A mother who had many regrets about the matches made by her daughters, said,

"I had eight daughters but none of them was able to get married in the village. All of them got married to boys from villages and cities a long way away. I myself always felt ashamed to compliment and boast about my daughters. They had no enthus-

"iastic relatives to attract proposals for them. The girls themselves were not as bold as today's girls to come and show themselves off and demonstrate their capabilities when a visitor came over. They were very modest and shy. Whenever people came over, they escaped and hid themselves. Nobody knew how many and what sort of daughters I had. So all of them married outsiders."

Women always compared the role of a responsible and clever mother in her children's marriages to the part played by an irresponsible woman, for instance a step-mother, who was believed to endanger the marriage opportunities of her children rather than finding suitable matches for them. Golzār (a step-mother) was always blamed by the village women who claimed that she frequently said bad things behind her step daughters' and sons' backs and poisoned people's minds about their behaviour, causing them ill-luck from then on. She told people that her daughter Zahrā was sickly and very sharp tongued and lazy in her housework and that her step-son was stupid, bad-tempered and unwilling to earn his living; and so nobody from the village would take any interest in them. The boy is not married yet and the girl just recently became the wife of an old widower who had divorced three wives and had five children.

Another important role which is played by mothers to draw attention to their daughters' existence is their friendly relationships with unmarried men of the village. The mothers who are relatively old, set up a pleasant and friendly relationship with young boys - become sweetly-spoken and full of flattery towards them; greet them, ask after their health and how their families are getting along, whenever they see them in the streets. Mothers ask their husbands to invite the young unmarried men to visit their homes in order to make them familiar at close quarters with her efficiency, cleverness and good taste. For a mother is believed to represent her daughter. If a mother is sociable and a good housewife, her daughter will be a

second embodiment of her mother. She entertains the young men with fāxri and girdakān - 'sultanas and walnuts'-which are the most valuable and expensive sweetmeats usually served by a mother-in-law to entertain her new son-in-law.

Besides, a mother takes advantage of her sons-in-law to attract proposals for her unmarried daughters. She tries to be a yāgli qayānā - an obsequious mother-in-law who always takes things to her son-in-law's household. She takes him a share of whatever she cooks, knits wool socks for him, she flatters him, pays him high respect, and presents him with whatever expensive and prized things she has got in her chest in order to demonstrate to unmarried men and their families that the man who marries her daughter will not incur an economic loss. When she takes things to her married daughters' households, she intentionally lets them be seen by women passing by to show off her solicitude for her son-in-law. Sometimes she takes food and tea to her son-in-law when he works in the field, which is a good opportunity to make other men working on nearby allotments notice her and think about her daughters.

Generally speaking, although parents may attract proposals for their daughters indirectly, initiation of marriage proceedings by the girl's family is not considered proper and is very exceptional. Usually the marriage proceedings are initiated by the boy's side and a girl's parents do not make suggestions about a suitable match until the offer comes for her. When a boy finishes his military service in his early twenties, his parents decide to get him married. The matter is discussed and consultations are carried out in the household among older male and female relatives, while the boy is not present. For any reference to him about his marriage in front of his older male kin is considered disrespectful to the latter. Though the older male kin are still the 'principals' in the process of selecting marriage partners for the younger family members, the custom is changing a little, and it is now accepted that boys should be consulted. Until a few years ago it was the general rule



that neither boys nor girls were consulted about the choice of their partners. After the preparatory negotiation had been completed with the girl's family, boys were informed of their potential partners by one of their female kin. A mother reported:

"It has been two years since we got my son Mohammad married to his cousin (FBD), but he still doesn't love her. When he finished his military service and came back to the village, his father decided to get him married and asked me to arrange a match with his cousin. After I'd arranged everything (took the ring and shawl and engaged her), I informed Mohammad that his father had engaged him to his cousin. He said he wasn't fond of her at all, but we didn't listen to him. He took sick and was in bed for two or three weeks. He didn't sleep properly. He was always mumbling and complaining in his sleep. He used to say, 'Oh God, help me, what am I going to do?' Sometimes he cried. We had negotiated the marriage, otherwise we'd have broken it off. We saw no alternative until some people advised me to go to a neighbouring village where there was a good prayer writer. I paid one hundred Tomāns and got him to write a prayer for affection. After that the boy got better and we managed to bring the girl in, but the boy is still not fond of her and rarely comes home."

Most of the women I talked to said that their older male kin do not see this sort of marriage as being advisable for boys any longer. They say that children have now changed and do not accept their parents' choices, causing them many difficulties. They believe that there is an old saying that the one who is chosen and approved by the heart seems nicer and more loveable - gövel sövan göcayh olār - though she might not be so, or the one who falls down through his own fault, does not cry - özi yixilān āglāmāz. This indicates that when a man chooses his own spouse, even if she is not a suitable match, he cannot put the blame on others, because he himself has chosen his partner and should bear the consequences. An apparently conspicuous influence on the recently changing attitudes of Doniq parents towards spouse choice for boys is the latter's decisive resistance to domination in this matter. The independ-

ence of the young men seems to be reinforced by the recent expansion of job possibilities for them in the nearby towns. Many boys have been reported as resisting their parents' choices by leaving the village for the towns, finding jobs there and never coming back to the village. This kind of rebellion brought shame to their families who had to give the negotiated girl back to her family. She, in turn, was dishonoured and never taken in marriage by the villagers.

Nowadays, however, as the result of boy's resistance and due to the changing opinions of parents, sons are allowed and expected to express their ideas about their selection of a wife. After the matter is discussed among the family members, the boy's mother or one of his married older sisters informs him of the decision and asks him if he has any particular girl in mind. As a matter of fact, owing to the strict segregation of the sexes, it is rarely possible for a boy to choose a particular partner. A man is allowed to meet freely only the mahram - women who are prohibited to him in marriage, i.e. his own mother, his father's widow or divorced wife or a woman who was his wet nurse and their siblings. Nor can he wed his own daughters, sisters, step-sisters, or their descendants or his paternal or maternal aunts, the daughters of his brothers or sisters, or the wives of his sons. Also forbidden to him are two sisters, a woman and her daughter, or a woman who has been suckled at the same breast as he, and his grandmothers.<sup>1</sup>

However, a man's knowledge about nā-mahram - 'women permitted him in marriage' - is very insufficient to enable him to choose a suitable match for himself. His knowledge of nā-mahram women might come from a childhood impression or from an illicit glimpse seized by chance. It has been mentioned before that the village girls usually go to fetch water from the spring or wash clothes at the river until they arrive at the age of

1. See Quran IV, 22, 23, 24; and Levy, The social structure of Islam..., op. cit., pp.104-5.

ten or twelve when they are secluded at home. Therefore, the grown-up boys try to get some ideas about the girls or even mark one as a future partner, though the girls are very young. In addition, when a marriage ceremony goes on in a household it is said that sometimes young unmarried boys creep stealthily across the roof of the house and look at girls through hatches in the roof. Similarly when all the girls are taken to the mosque once a year during Moharram ( a holy month) they are able to take a quick look at the village boys. While the religious ceremony is going on in the men's part of the building which is divided from the women's section by a low wooden partition, while covering themselves strictly with their čādirā and pretending that they are watching the ceremony the women and young girls take a look at the men. Of course, because women are concealed by their veils, the men cannot recognize them, but while covering their whole faces except for one eye, the women are able to look at the men.

On the whole, although girls and boys might know what members of the other sex look like, their knowledge about each other is too limited to help them choose an eligible partner for themselves. Therefore unable to make any suggestion as to their marriage choice, most boys leave the selection of their mates to their parents. This is the time when older married women's opinions are sought after and respected by men. The men of a household are well-informed about the social, economic and personal characteristics of the village men, but know nothing about the women. Therefore, it is the business of women to introduce or find suitable matches for their unmarried male relatives. It is women who, through having close contact with the women's world , have reliable information about girl's characteristics, working capability, health, their skills and beauty. Women normally know that it is mostly their responsibility to find an ideal and appropriate match for their unmarried male kin when they grow up, even if the final sanction has to be given by their menfolk. Thus, they observe the behaviour of

girls from childhood (at the spring or elsewhere in public) and make a careful note of the girls' attitudes if they visit the latters' homes. They consider very carefully the way the girls talk, walk, entertain people and the way they handle work. In this way the mothers are able, from experience, to build up a picture of the kind of girl they would like to choose, in the future, for their sons: for the making of this kind of choice is one of the duties of a good mother. Of course it is very difficult for women to be able to gather accurate information about the behaviour of girls, for women are generally familiar with the criteria considered important in choosing a girl as a spouse and so they teach the younger women to behave correspondingly whenever they are in the company of an older woman. For instance, a girl is always taught by her mother not to sit down at all when a visitor comes over; she must work very hard; show herself more active and bright than usual in order to make the visitor think such and such a girl is very healthy and is like a polāt - 'steel' - who never breaks down or becomes ill. But women make an effort to gain real information about girls and their families. When a girl is tentatively selected as a partner for a boy, older women are asked to suggest several girls and make available the initial information collected about them to the male members of the household, who then consider the available information about these girls, taking into account their male relatives' social and economic status, and choose an appropriate girl. Before a proposal is sent to the girl considered suitable by the men of the boy's family, the boy's mother or older sister attempts to make absolutely certain of the true characteristics of the girl. They inquire about her from one of her close neighbours without making reference to their intentions or they themselves drop in unexpectedly to exchange some article for instance, wool, which is quite a common habit among the village women, or to borrow something, all in an effort to see if the girl is at home, and if she is busy at her carpet weaving or housework. Finally, the family's choice of a bride is discussed with the boy. If he



agrees, the process of match-making goes forward.

The general method of initiation of match-making is called elčilix - 'the go-between' game which is usually played by women. In contrast to the Shabsavan community of Azarbayjan where it is usually men - the boy's father, elder brothers, and senior cousins who play the role of elči,<sup>1</sup> in Doniq it is not considered appropriate for the men to deliver the marriage request. The reason for this is that the request might be turned down, in which case the man's 'face' and social status would be endangered; he would be ridiculed by people who would say that such and such a man asked such and such a man's daughter to be his son's bride, but his request was turned down. It is not important for a woman if her request is turned down, but a man enjoys special respect and status in the community merely because he is a 'man' and would feel that his virility and reputation had been diminished if he had a request of this kind rejected. Only in important cases such as competition for a girl who is from a good background with many families competing for her, will the male members of a family act as an elči. The boy's father along with one of the village's aq-saqgal - 'grey beards' - (usually the kad-xudā - the village chief) go to give the offer to the girl's father. In this case, the girl's father cannot refuse the offer because of his respect for the grey-beard.

In an ordinary suit, however, the mother of the boy, along with his aunt or married sister, go secretly to the girl's house to find out from her parents if they will accept the boy as their servant - Nökar - an interesting inversion of reality! The girl's mother cannot give any idea of the answer until she has discussed the subject with the girl's male relatives. The girl's father consults his cousins about the offer and also discusses the proposal with tira grey-beards who will together investigate the boy's character to determine whether he is a good or

1. N. Tapper, op. cit., p. 45.

bad tempered man, has ever been in a fight with anyone, is a good bread-winner, or a pleasure-seeker; a gambler; a healthy man and so on - and eventually they make their decision. More important, the behaviour of a boy's mother, with whom the potential bride will spend most of her time, is a central factor bearing on the decision. The girl's mother is asked to give information about the boy's mother - whether she behaves modestly in women's gatherings; or backbites, whether she is critical about unimportant things; and how she treats her daughters-in-law and runs her household. Even if a boy is considered to be an ideal potential match - is good-natured, honourable, hard-working and healthy, if one of his parents, particularly his mother, does not behave properly in the community, the boy is refused any village wife at all. He has to marry someone from outside the village.

As a final precaution, the girl's father consults the Quran - istixāra. If the Quran augurs well, the father accepts the proposal. Even if the girl's parents want to give a positive answer, they purposely delay in order to pretend that their girl is not so worthless that her parents must rush to give her away. The boy's family has to contact the girl's male relatives many times before they receive the final response. In the case of their not regarding the marriage demands as suitable for their daughter, the girl's parents are very careful as to how they turn down the request. They try to give a reason for refusing the offer which is fair and acceptable to the boy's side. For in most cases, the rejection of a marriage demand creates rivalry and enmity between families. Many instances were reported in which a girl's male relatives refused to give a positive response to a boy's family, and the latter tried to harass the girl and her relatives in any way they could: the girl's house had been broken into and her brothers had been threatened with death and an effort had also been made to slander the girl in order to bring shame to her and endanger her marriage opportunities. Therefore, parents always attempt to

refuse a marriage proposal with a cheerful face, gradually convincing the boy's family that, for instance, the girl is not yet at a really suitable age for marriage or that the girl herself is not interested in marriage yet. Whereas if the offer is suitable, none of these objections is taken into account.

As pointed out earlier, although the control of older male family members has been relaxed to some extent over the selection of wives by younger men, they still exert strict control and influence over the marital destiny of younger women. According to Islamic law, a woman's own consent is indispensable to the validity of a marriage, but a marriage is also regarded as invalid and illegal if the girl's guardian (father, grandfather or other male kin) does not consent to it.<sup>1</sup> In Doniq a girl's sāhib - guardian - has unlimited rights and power in the decisions associated with her marriage. Her own consent is not taken into account at all. Her guardians - father, brother, or if they are dead, her uncles and cousins, can give her in marriage whenever they wish - in childhood, before puberty and to whomsoever they wish.<sup>2</sup>

Some years ago, a girl in Doniq used to be given in marriage and taken to her husband's house when she was very young (8-10). Therefore, she was too young to understand anything about the meaning of marriage or to be able to play a part in her marital destiny. The only view she had about her marriage was her opposition to her guardian because he had sent her away to live with a strange family. The subject is also discussed at length by Rice (1923) who says of the typical Persian woman:

"She is betrothed and married as a child without the slightest reference to her own wishes or ideas, in fact without any knowledge on her part of the

1. Quran, 4:20; see also Galwash, op. cit., p. 132.

2. Cf. Gordon's report of conditions in pre-revolutionary Algeria, op. cit., p. 15.

"man to whom she is to be married. She may find herself married to an old man, or she may find that she is one of several wives, just a new toy for some wealthy man. Besides fellow wives, she may find a temporary wife, a concubine or a slave sharing her husband's attention."<sup>1</sup>

A woman who had been married for fifteen years told me,

"I was very young when I was taken to my husband's house. Women told me that I was going to be a bride. I was very excited at the idea of becoming a bride. I thought becoming a bride was being bought new clothes, sweets and gold. When I was taken to my husband's house, I thought I was going to a party. I wore all the new clothes and jewelery, laughing and jumping around whereas a true bride should be very modest and shouldn't move at all. We went with some women to a house. While the dinner was served I ate a lot although a bride usually gets worried about the wedding night and cannot eat anything. After the dinner was finished, when the woman got ready to leave, I got ready too to leave with them, but I was told that I had to stay there. I cried and begged my aunt to take me back to my parents' house, but nobody listened to me. I escaped early in the morning and went to my parents, complaining and crying to my father, asking why he had sent me to live there. Several times I escaped, but was beaten severely and sent back."

The majority of the village women complained that their marriage was spoiled because they had been forced into marriage so early. They said they did not understand about marriage or understand their husbands until they had given birth to two or three children. Today, however, as the result of various factors (see pp 345- 50 ) the age of marriage has risen and girls (though they may be betrothed before puberty) are not taken to their husbands' households until they reach adolescence.

1. Rice, op. cit., p. 91; cf. Nomeni, op. cit.



However, even if a girl is now given an opportunity to understand the implications of marriage, she is not permitted any active part in the selection of her husband; she has no chance to express her wishes, no right to present her ideas or have any influence whatsoever on the choice of her marriage partner. She is neither consulted about her marriage, nor even informed about whom she is going to marry until some neighbours or distant relatives tell her the name of her fiance. A sixteen year old informant who had been married for a year described her engagement by saying that during her engagement her mother told her that they were expecting some visitors to come over from a neighbouring village and that she had to receive and entertain them. When she entered the room to greet them, the women put a ring around her finger and a šāl - 'shawl' - on her head. At that moment she understood that it was her engagement party. She did not know who was to be her husband until she went to fetch water from the spring where the women gathered and informed her that she had been betrothed to a man from a neighbouring village.

On the whole, a girl is considered shameless and immodest if she expresses any opinion on the subject of her marriage or refuses to marry the match who is considered by her guardians to be suitable for her. A woman with four married daughters said,

"Thanks to God none of my daughters turned her father's choice down. They married whoever we had chosen for them."

Some older women said that girls' marriages are none of their business and it is not for them to express opinions about the partner who has been chosen for them. Whether they like the boys chosen for them or not, they should not make any comment. The choice is their father's choice and must not be turned

down, because that would be considered disrespectful. After all the fathers are older and more experienced and know better. Some others said that girls are not familiar with boys and their families, so how could they choose their partners even if they were allowed to make suggestions? Besides, if they chose their husband themselves and the latter proved to be bad - to maltreat them, or to be men of pleasure or to divorce them, what would they do? Their fathers or brothers would never listen to them and accept them back into the family; they would say that the women had chosen their partners and must also endure them. Finally, others told me that even if girls refuse or resist marriage to the man chosen for them by their guardians, they are never listened to but are beaten and forcibly sent to their in-laws' houses. Kūlsūm, whose daughter had just been married said,

"when we chose Sāhib Ali, my sister's son, for my daughter Mūnir she didn't say anything at first, but after two or three months she started saying that she didn't like him. She couldn't tell her father anything about it, but pleaded secretly several times with me to give her ring back. I talked to her father, but he told me not to listen to her and let her go and be a wife and take her food and clothes. The girl was very sneaky. On the wedding day when she was taken to sign her marriage contract in Sarāb (the nearby town), she refused to sign. Finally, with the urging of the mullā and her father who had promised to buy clothes and jewelery for her, she signed the contract. Her father was then very angry with her. He said to me that Mūnir had disgraced him."

Similarly a sixteen year old informant said that parents in the village beat their daughters and force them into marriage. She continued,

"I didn't want to marry my husband, when his parents made the proposal. He is my relative. I had seen him before. I used to make fun of him - the way he talked, walked and looked when he was unmarried and used to come to visit my parents on

"several occasions. I did not believe anyone would accept him as a husband. In the end he became my own gesmat - 'fate' - after many months I struggled and begged my parents to forget him and make me the wife of anyone else they would like."

Clearly then, a boy is given the right to make suggestions as regards the partner chosen for him and if he is not fond of a particular girl who has been selected, the chosen match is dispensed with and another one searched for; but a girl's views are not taken into account at all and it is considered shameful for her to have the slightest influence on the decisions associated with her own marriage. It is possible for the older women to have an indirect influence on the decision of older male family members about the choice of partner for younger men. For instance, if a boy is not interested in the girl chosen by his father as an appropriate match for him, his mother might mediate between the boy and his father or change the opinion of the father concerning the girl by distorting information about the girl and her female relatives. But in relation to the selection of a mate for girls it is impossible for older women to have influence. Often older women declared that they try to be neutral about the marriage choices for their daughters. If they interfere and the marriage becomes unsatisfactory, they would be the ones who would automatically be blamed by their menfolk.

#### Criteria considered important in match making:

Before an Islamic marriage may take place certain recommendations must be taken into account. These pertain to (1) consanguinity and affinity as they affect the choice of a partner; (2) the religious affiliation of the man and the woman; (3) the idda, a retirement into chastity by a divorced woman or widow; (4) an arrangement prior to marriage about the amount of the dower (mahr); and (5) the obligation to recognize the principle of Kafa'a or equality (determined in Islam by lineage,

occupation, uprightness of character, and economic standing).<sup>1</sup> In the arrangement of marriages in Doniq, in addition to the first four conditions which play vital roles in the legalization of a marriage, adherence to the principle of kafa'a (equality of social and economic status) is also a very definite consideration in match making. In the past in Doniq, as noted in Chapter one, clan endogamy was commonly emphasized. It was considered socially shameful for a Bay clan member to marry a Tāt or Xalaš. The main criterion and proviso for a Bay in arranging a marriage was that the opposite party should be a Bay. Bay preferred to marry Bay of whatever economic status. With the recent changes in Doniq, clan endogamy has lost its importance and it is not regarded any more as the paramount consideration in the marriages of village people, though it is still considered important for a Bay. For the Bay still believe that a woman from the tribes of Tāt or Xalaš cannot be an ideal or even good mother-in-law or a wife for a young person from the Bay clan. The Tāt or Xalaš woman is believed not to be a good housewife, being untidy, dirty and unable to run an efficient household. Besides women from these other clans are thought to be unsociable and Bays think they do not bring their children up in the proper ways and most of them are believed to be shameless women who do not maintain 'pardah' as strictly as the Bay women - they are usually out of their homes dropping in freely on visits from neighbour to neighbour. Similarly a boy from the Tāt or Xalaš tribes is believed not to be an ideal husband for a Bay girl. He is considered belāyqat - 'worthless'. The Bay claim that Tāt and Xalaš men are foul-mouthed, frequently swearing even at their own mothers and sisters; such men are beqeyrat - 'zealless' - who do not take good care of their womenfolk; and do not see any difference between men and women, making their women do the same jobs as the men do. They sit idle and order their women to do their work as taking care of animals as well. Although these beliefs still reinforce endogamy, they do not do so to the same extent as before. Informants reported that the Bay try as

1. Vreede-de Stuers, op. cit., p. 9.



far as possible to keep away from the Tāt and Xalaš, but in exceptional circumstances such as a case of a boy falling in love or when there is no suitable match among the Bay, the latter do not regard it as out of the question to approach the other clans. A Bay mother recalled,

"My son liked a girl from the Tāt who was living in our neighbourhood. I had no alternative but to choose her. Since his father had decided to choose anybody's girl whom my son suggested, we couldn't object to it. When my married daughters understood that I had gone to the Tāt's door, they became angry and blamed me, asking if I couldn't find anybody else better than a Tāt."

On the whole, the Bay take those girls who have a good reputation and who are otherwise suitable from among the Tāt and Xalaš, but never give the same kind of girl in marriage to these 'inferior' clans. For instance, when a girl is pretty, efficient in housework, is in her early teens and her family is of a good social and economic background she is never given very easily to a Tāt, but a girl of the same calibre is accepted in marriage very easily from a Tāt or Xalaš.

Taken as a whole, clan endogamy is no longer considered to be an important element in the marriage arrangements for children. The first main condition in negotiating marriages is that the potential partners should be 'insiders'. In other words nowadays 'village endogamy' has been substituted for clan endogamy.

In general, marriage within the village community is considered prestigious and it is regarded a humiliation for a person, especially a woman, to leave her place of origin and to go to live in a strange community. It is believed that if girls and boys are of good character and are not defective in one way or another, nobody from the village will allow them to go outside for a spouse. People will make proposals to them at the

first opportunity. By the same token, the man or woman who has married into the Doniq community from outside, does not enjoy much respect and status among the people. This belief of the village people about outsiders is based on their own experience. Usually in the village, those girls or boys who are considered defective - accused of doing something scandalous, given back by a family because of the breaking of an engagement, or who suffer from a chronic illness, or are of an age beyond the limit considered appropriate for marriage, or those who are widows or widowers, cannot marry inside the village and have to go outside to look for a partner. If one takes this sort of person in marriage, one is ridiculed and suffers a loss of social status.

In addition, people believe that marriage inside the village is the safest way to settle children in marriage. They are familiar with each other's characteristics and social and economic status and are sure that they will not be cheated as might be the case with an outsider. However carefully one investigates an outsider's reputation, it is impossible to gain exact information about their true position, people often remarked. Outsiders are always deceitful in explaining their situation - the wealth, character, beauty, skills and jobs of potential parties. It is true that in those cases of marriage outside the village, deception has been more common than in marriages between 'insiders'. In the case of one marriage which recently took place, a boy who had become mentally and physically defective as the result of measles was not able to marry for a long time. Finally he was able to take a wife from a neighbouring village by cheating: knowing about his defect, nobody from the village was ready to let him take any girl of theirs to be his wife. Consequently his parents made a proposal to a girl from a neighbouring village, taking the boy's younger brother who was healthy and good-looking, to show to the girl's guardian and pretending that this younger boy was the prospective husband. The proposal was accepted without further investigation.

The girl was 12 years of age and very good-looking. her only disadvantage was that her father was dead and she had no male guardian to look after her. She lived with a poor step-mother. When the girl was brought to the village, she encountered a different boy. She escaped several times to her village, but was brought back and finally her in-laws and husband emigrated from the village to Tehran in order to live so far away from the village of the girl that she would be unable to escape. For people who marry from the same village this kind of trick can never happen.

Moreover, marriage outside the village is known to be costly for parents. The parents have to pay for transportation and visit their daughters at least once in two to three months, taking presents to them, their husbands, children and other in-laws, in order to encourage the husbands and in-laws to treat their daughters well. Similarly, when their daughters' in-laws come over to Doniq to visit, they have to give them hospitality for a while, entertaining them in a most lavish way and finally see them off with presents like butter, cheese and chicken - all of which places a great economic burden on the parents. Further, when a girl marries outside the village, she undergoes a more drastic break from her relatives than when she is married to an insider. Inside the village, her kingroup is within easy reach and can be appealed to for political, economic and social support whenever it is needed. The closeness of a woman's relatives, particularly male ones, has a bearing on her husband's and her in-laws' treatment of her. When she is maltreated she can easily appeal to her parents for political and psychological support without paying for transportation or being chaperoned by a man. A woman who is married inside the village, especially in the first years of her marriage when she lives with her in-laws and leads a sort of experimental life, drops in at her father's house at least once every two or three days to pour out her grievances to her mother and sister, tell them whether she is or is not treated well by her in-

laws; put to hard work; and whether she is given enough food. On her visits she can also supplement the insufficiency of her food since it is quite common for a woman not to have enough to eat when she is newly married and lives with her husband's family (see pp.195-96). Naturally for the women who have married into Doniq from outside the village there are no such possibilities.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking taking into account these advantages of marriage to an insider, most parents prefer their daughters to get married to a village resident of any social and economic status whatever, rather than going outside the village. It is often said that it is much better to give a girl in marriage to a nāxurči or quziči - a 'shepherd'-from inside the village rather than to an outsider arbāb - 'landowner'. Within the village, endogamy within the kingroup, particularly with paternal and maternal parallel and cross-cousins, is the most conspicuous and preferred form of marriage. At least fifty per cent of marriages occurs between relatives.

In Muslim law and among Muslim communities, marriage between cousins especially patrilateral parallel cousin - amiqizi-amioqli, is the most preferred and widespread practice.<sup>2</sup> One explanation given for the practice is the consolidation of family wealth which, in the case of marriage outside the family by girls who are in receipt of property through marriage settlements and inheritance, has to be disintegrated and part transferred to another family or lineage. Another defence frequently put forward is that the patrilateral parallel cousin marriage strengthens an already established relationship between families and ensures family solidarity.

I discovered that although the community of Doniq believed in

1. Cf. D.A. Chekkie, "Mate Selection, Age at Marriage, and Propinquity Among the Lingayats of India", in Journal of marriage and the family, (1968), pp. 707-11.

2. See Vreede-de Stuers, op. cit., p. 8; Saifullah Khan, op. cit., p. 238; Papanek, op. cit., p. 303; Eglar, op. cit., pp. 93-94; N. Tapper, op. cit., pp. 43-4; and Arasteh, op. cit., p. 109.



the second argument and often pointed it out as justification for their preference for cousin marriage, the first justification did not apply to them, because the girls usually did not receive the inheritance due to them according to Islamic law. In Doniq, although it is not obligatory for a cousin to marry her cousin as it is in many Muslim communities. On the whole, relatives feel responsibility for the marriage of each others children. As an informant put it,

"why should one make a strange girl look after a husband, household and children instead of a woman from his own people?"

Besides, parents believe that their daughters are familiar with the characters and way of life of their relatives and so it is much easier for them to adjust themselves. Girls who marry into an unrelated group, have a total lack of experience of the new group and encounter great difficulties in adapting themselves. In addition, the position of a girl who has come from a distant group is weaker and more distressing and difficult than the situation of one who has made a close kin marriage. On the subject of the preference for kin marriage, a proverb was often quoted that says, "if the flesh is eaten, the bone still remains" - atida yeyilsa - sümiyi qālār, indicating that whatever sufferings a girl's own relatives who are also her in-laws might give to her, naturally they cannot break her bones or turn her out, as unrelated in-laws might do: for her bones are part of their own anatomy, so to speak, and any damage to her body will affect the body of the whole family. A further reason suggested for the preference of kin endogamy is the reduction in marriage expenses. After all, relatives have more consideration for each other's economic position in fixing kabin - 'mahr', indirect dower and wedding expenses. On the other hand, some parents do not think it proper to give their daughter in marr-

riage within their kingroup, because relatives do not consider the marriage transactions very carefully and also because one cannot very readily object to arrangements. Non-relatives are "gattim-göttim" - consider the giving and taking of presents and marriage obligations in accordance with the fixed amount.

However, along with the consideration of all these criteria in the choice of a husband, a girl's guardians also try to choose her partner from a family with whom they have as much in common as possible in terms of economic and political standing. Families of equal wealth tend to intermarry. People of Doniq believe that Har kas galayh ôz bâbin Tâpā - 'everybody should find her own proper match or mate'; poor and landless families unite in marriage with poor and landless ones and landowners and prosperous families with landowner and prosperous ones. Prosperous families believe that a poor girl is not sociable; does not know how to cook the food specially required for prosperous households or to behave in order to entertain the family members in the way expected, for she has been brought up in a different manner, suited to the way of life of the poor. Similarly, the rich girl has always lived in a comfortable condition with enough material goods and so it is hard for her to endure a poor situation. These views tally with the Shi'a prescription that a girl should be maintained at the level to which she was accustomed before marriage.

However, since the prospective partners, especially the female are powerless to make decisions or to consider the criteria and directions affecting the choice of their marriage partners, it is the duty of their guardians and representatives to weigh carefully all considerations and to choose an appropriate match for them. It should be borne in mind that the conditions and criteria pointed out in previous pages for choosing a suitable match are not always taken into account in total and absolute terms or in all marriages to the same degree. In some marriages some of the criteria are regarded as important and in

some others none of the conditions are taken into consideration at all. For instance, for the guardians of those girls who are considered defective as described previously - those, in other words, who are considered to have violated the modesty codes, either through accusation and calumny, or from real evidence, or who suffer a certain disease, even if it is unimportant or whose first engagement has been broken off; or women who are widows and have no male guardians to protect them - for all these women no criteria or conditions are thought important in the choice of a spouse. It does not matter whether the potential partner is an outsider, insider, married or unmarried, is a widower with many children, is well-mannered, is economically able to support his wife and children; and is suitable as regards relative age. The only important point is that he be a 'husband' who would provide shelter for the defective girl and relieve her guardian from responsibility and from the taunts of other people. Zahrā, a 17 year old girl whose age was slightly beyond the normal age for marriage (10-15), was not considered a suitable match for anyone in the village, because she suffered from a slight but persistent stomach ache. Besides, the village people tried to discourage any marriage proposal coming to her from outside the village. Her parents made it known openly that they were looking for only a 'man' without any specific condition attached. Eventually a forty-seven year-old outsider, a widower who had divorced three wives and had five children, made a proposal for her. Her parents handed her over very gladly to be this man's wife - and felt relieved after sending her to her husband's household.

Also for the father who is poor and particularly for a man who has many daughters, the suitability of a match is of no real importance. Any man is looked for who will accept the responsibility of providing maintenance for the girls. Most of marriage situations I studied appeared to lack any conditions for suitability whatsoever. In some, women who were very young (12-14) had been married to men of 35-40 years of age. The

reason for this, as most of women themselves pointed out, was the poverty of their guardians. A middle-aged woman who had been married for the second time described her first marriage as follows:

"My father was very poor and just wanted to sell his daughters and send them away. I was 12 years old when my father decided to give me in marriage to my cousin (MBS) who was the same age as my father. He was so old that he didn't have any teeth in his mouth. His wife had died two years before this. I was very young, but I knew some-  
things about marriage. I cried and complained to my father that I didn't want to marry a man the age of my own father, but they didn't listen to me. He used to come and bring a lot of presents to me and my family... But I refused them and resisted going to his house. One day my mother sent me out to borrow something from a neighbour. As soon as I walked out, I noticed the same man who was wearing a white shirt and riding a horse. He snatched me and rode away. That was the plan of my own parents although I hadn't suspected it. Although I screamed, nobody heard me. That night he forced me to have sex with him. He was a very big and strong man and I was too small to stop him from having intercourse. After three days, when my parents came over and fetched me to učim pilowvi - (on the third day of the wedding, the bride and bridegroom are usually invited to have a meal with the bride's family), I refused to go back to the house of the man. My father tried to force me to go back by beating me, but I didn't. I threatened them that if they wanted to send me back, I would sprinkle oil all over my body and set fire to myself... Anyhow although I was married I stayed with my parents for three years and didn't go back and finally the man was compelled to divorce me."

In the selection of husbands for non-defective girls too, it is unknown for guardians to arrange marriages merely for the benefit of the girls themselves. However, guardians generally weigh the conditions in an attempt to settle their wards in an appropriate marriage and commonly use the girls as pawns in their political and economic relationships. It has been noted earlier that a father will marry off his daughter in exchange



for receiving wheat and fodder for a certain period, or he promises her in exchange for receiving a hand in his agricultural and animal husbandry, or to strengthen his friendly relationship with a family group especially one which is wealthier and more highly respected than his own and which enjoys better social status. Such marriages serve the predominant interest of the families rather than complying with the slightest interest or inclination of the couple. The guardians give more attention to the adjustment of their own economic and social status than to any of the hopes or opinions of girls themselves as to what sort of partners with what manners, ideas and physical appearance they might have in mind, believing that interest between couples can be developed after marriage. Although romantic love is considered unlikely to guarantee a successful and stable marriage, statistics show that arranged marriages have no greater chance of success. If some are successful, many result in conflict and tension between spouses or to a cold and loveless life for the couple and their children. Some women reported that they were not interested in their spouses when their marriages were arranged and still after many years of marriage no interest and attachment has been created between them. Nevertheless, because of their economic dependency and their upbringing which encourages self-sacrifice and complete abnegation of self, women try to adjust themselves without much objection, though their quiet misery may threaten their physical and spiritual well-being. It is not the case with men. In virtue of his economic power and dominant position a man does not try to adjust his behaviour and even puts the blame for every problem on his wife, asking why she was ever given to him for a wife; and of course this gives her added suffering. A reliable informant reported that Aziz did not like his wife when she was chosen for him 20 years ago. He is still in

1. Similar situations have been reported by the following writers; see Mahler, op. cit., pp. 157-58; Eglar, op. cit., p. 93; E. Reed, The Problems of Women's Liberation, (New York, 1971) pp. 80-81; T. Ali Baig, Women of India, (Magha, 1958), pp. 113-14; Sanday, op. cit., pp. 189-206.

the same position and no change has taken place in his ideas and attitude towards her. During 20 years of marriage his wife has given birth to only one child, because it has been a long time since her husband has bothered to have sexual relations with her. It was often reported that when a woman is not fond of her spouse, she tolerates it silently and peacefully. Whereas a man maltreats his wife, withdraws provision for her, does not allow her to visit friends or her relatives, does not take her to the doctor when necessary, often spends his time away from home and makes it common knowledge that he is not fond of his wife.

### Marriage ceremonies

It has already been discussed how, owing to the 'pardah system' and the segregation of the sexes, and also to the influence of the older generation and the authority of guardians, a woman is completely passive in relation to the decisions over her marital destiny. But her passivity does not come to an end with the choice of her husband. She is expected to continue passive throughout the entire range of marriage ceremonies; after settlement in her in-laws' house, and in short throughout her entire life in all social and family relations. When a woman's sāhib - guardian - agrees and gives the final sanction to a suggested proposal, the niṣān - 'pledge'-or engagement ceremony - is arranged soon after. When the prospective bride and bridegroom are from the village itself, it is not necessary to show them to each other on this occasion. As mentioned before, they might have gained some impression of each other in childhood, because of being relatives or from having been present at some special ceremony together. However if one of the partners comes from outside the village, they are completely unknown to each other which necessitates an introduction. By Islamic law, before betrothal, the intended bride is permitted to be seen by the man who seeks her hand, lest a blunder in choice or an error of judgement should defeat the very purpose

of marriage.<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, when both partners are from the village, whether they have any idea about each other or not, they are not allowed to see each other before the marriage is officially contracted. It is considered shameful for a man to allow his daughter to be seen by a nā-mahram - 'man permitted in marriage' - before the marriage is contracted, though both sides might have agreed to the proposal. It is believed that a girl usually receives many different proposals, and if she were to be shown to everybody who proposed, what would happen to her family honour and 'face'. She is shown only to the boy's older female relatives. If they accept her, their son will also accept her. But when the potential bridegroom is an outsider, it is acceptable for a girl to be momentarily an object of demonstration in a ceremony which is called in local language qiz qörsatmayh - 'girl demonstration'. However, no one from the village must know about the 'demonstration', for if the girl is not approved, her family and she would become objects of ridicule. Usually in late evening when it is dark, the boy is accompanied by his eldest married sister or aunt to the girl's house to see the girl. Until the girl has been approved first of all by the boy's female companions, she is not shown to the boy. First the female relatives visit the girl who usually sits in a separate room strictly covered with her čādīrā. The girl's veil is lifted by the women and she is turned around and considered carefully, in terms of her bodily features; hair, complexion and haya - modest demeanour; at a glance they estimate how much hayā - 'shame' and 'modesty' is embedded in her and whether she is what they wanted or not. If the women approve the girl, she is again concealed with her veil, and is accompanied by the women to another room to be demonstrated to the boy. Hiding her face with her čādīrā, the girl carries a cup of tea to offer to the boy. Embarrassed, blushing and

1. Galwash, op. cit., p. 129.

trembling, she sets the tea in front of the boy and hurries to leave the room, but the companions try to pull her veil to let the boy catch a quick look at her face. The girl grasps her veil firmly and does not let it fall down completely. More often than not the boy does not succeed in seeing her face properly and the girl is compelled to bring him tea two or three times in the same way. The boy brings with him a ring and a box of sweets by which he expresses his decision of approval. If he likes the girl he leaves the gifts in her house; otherwise he takes them back. When this final stage of the marriage proposal has been completed, it is then necessary to carry out formal preliminaries to legalize the marriage.

According to Islamic law, although a public declaration of marriage is necessary, no religious service or ceremony is deemed absolutely essential. Marriage takes the form of a civil contract witnessed and signed by the two sides, a contract which includes a fixed sum of money or property as the 'mahr' of the wife. A Muslim woman is entitled to receive a sum of money from her husband at the time of marriage; this consideration is known as mahr - 'dower'. The mahr is to be paid in two portions: one part is payable to the woman promptly after the consummation of marriage and another part is deferred until the time of the dissolution of marriage by death or divorce. It is supposed to function as a check and protection against the possible maltreatment of the woman by the husband, of a deterrent to his unlimited power of divorce, and an assurance of provision in times of difficulty. Although no specific amount is required to be settled as 'mahr' and the amount previously settled can be increased or decreased by the mutual consent of the husband and wife, on the whole, according to the commentators a large amount is not desirable and the small amount set by the Prophet for his daughter Fatima, wife of Ali, is regarded as a good precedent. The deferred dower, however remains absolutely the property of women and they have the right to demand it from their husbands whenever they wish



to do so; and the latter being regarded as indebted are enjoined to pay it whenever the creditors call for it. Furthermore, a wife can renounce her mahr to her husband. The remission of the 'mahr' by a wife is called hibatu<sup>1</sup> 'mahr' or hiba-i-mahr.<sup>1</sup>

The Civil Contract and 'mahr' prescribed by Islam is recognized among Doniq people as a preliminary and primary measure to legalize marriage and the sexual union of the couple. At the dānišix ceremony, before the engagement ceremony, all older male kin, including the bridegroom, go to the girl's house to fix the amount of her kabin (mahr) with her sahibs - guardians. It is culturally and religiously only the concern of men to settle the amount of kabin of a girl among themselves and no woman is allowed to interfere in the matter. Each year, according to the economic status of the people and the current price of goods in the market, the village aq-saqqa - 'grey-beards' - specify an average kabin and baslix - 'prompt part of the mahr'. In 1979 the amount of specified baslix and kabin for prosperous families who were also landowners was a sum in the region of 10,000 Tomān<sup>2</sup> (£626) for baslix and 20,000 Tomān (£1,250) for kabin. For the poor and landless people it was about 2,000 Tomān (£125) for baslix and 5,000 Tomān (£312) for kabin. The amount of kabin and baslix fixed for the poor or the rich should not exceed the specified amount, but it can be adjusted within the range.

The dānišix ceremony - 'fixing the quantity of the marriage settlements' - may take five or six hours before all the details are settled among the men of the families. All the particulars

1. See A.A.A. Fyze, Outlines of Mohammadean Law, (London, 1949); 2nd ed., especially pp. 111-18; Levy, An Introduction to the Sociology... op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 160-64; and Bevan Jones, op. cit., pp. 130-42.

2. The Tomān is the basic unit of the Iranian currency. One Tomān is equivalent to 16 pence at the current rate of exchange.

of the girl; her health, beauty, skill, modesty, virginity, age and her family's social and economic backgrounds are important guides in determining the amount of 'mahr'.<sup>1</sup> The occasion takes the exact form of a bargain in the market. Mohammad Saleh Abu Sagiyyi, a Persian scholar, writes,

"In the market a fraudulent seller tries to cheat the customer and sell his worthless goods at the highest price possible and similarly the buyer attempts to show that the commodity is defective and damaged and to purchase it at a much reduced price, in the same way, [on the occasion of the dānišix, the male relatives of the prospective bride and bridegroom take the same roles of seller and buyer]"<sup>2</sup>

They haggle about the amount of kabin, putting forward the girl's personal qualities and comparing them with the backgrounds and the amount of kabin of other female relatives who have been married recently. Sometimes their discussion ends in a quarrel and they abandon the bargain entirely and with the advice of other āq-saqqa - 'grey-beards' - they go on again until they reach an agreement.

The amount settled at the dānišix is not supposed to be a final and unalterable sum. If the period of engagement lasts for two or three years, the girl's guardian may refuse to deliver the girl and will ask for an increase in the amount of kabin. The bāšlix of Kōlsūm's daughter had been fixed at about 2,500 Tomān (£156) when she was engaged two years previously. Kōlsūm said that that summer when the girl's in-laws wanted to take her, her father would refuse to deliver the girl and ask for an increase in her bāšlix to 3,000 Tomān (£187), because the price of everything in the market had gone up. If they did

1. See J. Henry Korson, "The Roles of Dower and Dowry as Indicators of Social Change in Pakistan", in Journal of marriage and family, (1968), pp. 696-707.

2. M.S.Abu Sa'idi, Xānavādeh-va Tarbiyat-e olād (Tehran, n.d.).

not meet the required amount, the girl would not be handed over.

In practice, in Doniq, the bāšlix is paid before the marriage is consummated and it is, in fact, the guardian rather than the married woman herself, who receives this initial part of the mahr. And the payment of the deferred part which usually consists of the greater part of the 'mahr' is not raised until the time of divorce, (which of course is not practicable in the village).

In reality, however, none of the arguments that 'mahr' is a check on the treatment of a woman by her husband and on his divorce of her and that it is an economic support for women has validity for the women of Doniq. The kabin and bāšlix are really just social contracts which establish and maintain a relationship between families and kingroups and are the signs of constant preoccupation with their prestige - 'šohrat' - rather than individual contracts and checks on husbands' possible maltreatment of their wives or protection in an economic sense. A boy's father should give some amount even if very small as bāšlix and the girl's father should similarly receive it and give some articles as Jehez - 'dowry' - to his daughter, otherwise the prestige of the concerned families will be endangered.

After receiving bāšlix from the boy's family, a girl's father prepares Jehez - the 'trousseau' - which often consists of clothes and household goods; two pieces of carpet, mattresses, blankets, a wooden chest, and some kitchen utensils. The value of articles given to the girl by her father should not be less than the value of the received bāšlix even if it is not higher. The value of all the items which a bride receives from her father, relatives and friends is checked item by item and compared to the value of bāšlix given. Quite often in order to uphold his daughter's name and affect the behaviour of her in-laws towards her and to reinforce his own prestige as well, a

father provides her Jehez equivalent to double that of the bāšlīx he has received, or if he enjoys a better economic status than the boy's family he dispenses with receiving any bāšlīx for his daughter and gives as much Jehez as he can in order to increase his social status. In any case, even if a father is helped to some extent by relatives and friends to prepare his daughter's Jehez, on the whole, the dowry with the additional expenses of gifts of clothing to the bridegroom and his family and the cost of the wedding itself, frequently place a considerable strain on the resources of the bride's family. It is not unusual for the father of the bride to find himself in straitened circumstances and to resort to borrowing considerable sums to meet these obligations. Müslim complained that with his poor position he had once borrowed 5,000 Tomān (£312) to provide the Jehez for one of his daughters who had married two years previously and he was going to borrow another 6,000 Tomān (£375) for another daughter who was engaged and was to be taken to her husband's house soon. Providing a dowry is an absolute and fixed feature of the villagers' lives. A girl who brings no dowry (which is a very exceptional situation) is constantly maltreated and taunted by her husband and his family, being reminded that she has not even provided a bowl for herself to have her food from so that she will not have to ask for it from her in-laws.

In any case, although kabin, bāšlīx and Jehez might temporarily help a girl to settle into marriage and favourably affect her relationship with her in-laws, they are of no permanent profit to her. The items given as her dowry by her father are often ephemeral articles such as clothes, pots, spoons, chests and so forth which are damaged or destroyed a short while after the marriage. Even then, a woman has no exclusive rights over the property included in her dowry. Dowry gifts are not transferred directly to the bride, but to her husband and in-laws who have the sole right to use them, and to look on them as a common resource to be appropriated by any member



of the family in time of dire needs. Mōkarram (a mother-in-law), complaining to me about the heavy expenditure required for the wedding of her newly-married son, told me that her husband was a poor, landless man, but he had managed to provide all the expenses needed for the marriage of his son two months previously. As a result, in order to supplement that year's annual budget, her husband had had to sell two carpets presented as dowry to her recently-married daughter-in-law. When I asked whether her daughter-in-law had objected or said anything, the mother-in-law answered, "Why should a daughter-in law interfere in these things".

With respect to the deferred part of the 'mahr' (which is often put forward by Muslim apologists as supplying economic protection and independence for the woman who can claim it if they should be divorced or after the death of their husbands) women of Doniq believe that it is a religious regulation to make them halāl - 'lawful'-for their husbands. If it is received by them they become nā-mahram and their sexual relationship is unlawful. Secondly, on the whole, it is not considered proper to demand it before the death of their husbands. Their relationships with their husbands and their in-laws would be adversely affected. As long as they are happy and provided for by their husbands, they said, "What would we do with our kabin?" Moreover, if they were to ask for it, it would never be possible for their husbands to pay such amounts. Therefore, women in Doniq do not receive their kabin until the death of their husbands. Even after the death of the husband, only from the estate of a man who has left surplus property, would it be possible to deduct the kabin; otherwise the women 'forgive' the amount to their husbands' estate. Finally even if it might be paid at the time of divorce or at the death of a husband, the amount of the kabin is not enough to enable women to live on it. Most women who had been married for twenty or thirty years reported that their kabin had been at most £30 and generally much less and asked what use it could have for them.

It would cover the expenses of only one or two days. The kabin of some widows whose husbands had died amounted to similar sums which were often deducted from the moveable and perishable household items of their husbands' estates and handed over to their sons - with whom they were living. In effect, therefore, these items became part of the inheritance of their sons. In regard to the argument that 'mahr' safeguards the wife from possible ill-treatment by her husband and from his unlimited power of divorce, it has been experienced in practice among many Muslim communities, including Doniq, that if a husband wants to divorce his wife, he uses many tricks to avoid payment. He ill-treats his wife so that she becomes compelled to leave his house and initiate divorce proceedings, in which case, according to Islamic law, it is for the wife to forfeit her kabin in order to induce him to repudiate her.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of one divorce case which had taken place five years previously the divorced girl's mother described how her son-in-law maltreated her daughter, repeatedly bruising her entire body with a stick, and leaving her in her father's house for months as well as telling her that he would not divorce her until her father initiated the proceedings. Finally her father was compelled to forfeit all the dowry which he had given his daughter, and her 'mahr', in order to make the young man divorce his daughter. The woman said,

"When your child is trapped in a fire, you wouldn't think about money. You would do everything to save her. We just said kabini halāl, jāni azād - 'he's welcome to her kabin, free her body...'"

In most cases the claim that the mahr protects the wife from arbitrary treatment by her husband and from divorce by him has practically no validity.

1. Papanek, op. cit., p. 307; Bevan Jones, op. cit., p. 139; and Vreede-de Stuers, op. cit., p. 15.

Engagement and wedding ceremonies:

After the amount of kabin and bāšlīx are fixed and settled among the male relatives on the occasion of the dānīšīx, the groom's female relatives bring presents - clothes, sweets and other gifts including a ring and shawl to mark the engagement of the girl. Throughout the engagement, which may last from six months to two years, the groom's family must continue to send presents of clothes, sweets, fruit and money for the bride and her female and male relatives. Once the engagement has taken place, the bride becomes more restricted in her lifestyle and until the wedding she maintains strict 'pardah' from her fiancé, even if they are close relatives (cousins) and she never secluded herself from him in such a strict way before. After betrothal she completely hides herself from her fiancé. The couple are not allowed to see each other until the night of the consummation. The bridegroom usually goes to visit his future in-laws on important occasions such as festivals, marriage ceremonies and funerals. Whenever he goes to the girl's home she escapes and usually hides herself on the roof of her house where it is impossible to have access to her, or locks herself in a separate room. An informant who had been married for a year said,

"Throughout my three years of engagement I never met him (her fiancé) once until a few days before my wedding. Whenever he came to visit my family, I got away, either through the window or through a hole in the stable wall. One day when my mother went to fetch water from the spring, I heard someone repeatedly calling my mother, 'Xānim', 'Xānim'. I recognized the voice as his. I went to hide myself in the gazna - flour store. He came and tried to push open the door, but couldn't. Finally, he sat down in the room by himself for a few minutes and then left... A few days before my wedding, my mother again wasn't at home when he came to fetch fodder from our stable. While he was working in the stable, I decided to take a quick look at him through the hole in the stable wall to see what he looked like. I locked the door of my room and timorously looked at him through the hole. I found him not bad-looking; he was alright in fact."

Women said that they felt embarrassed and ashamed in front of the other members of their family to sit in a room where their fiancé's were sitting, even though their parents were present. Any hint of appearing interested in one's fiancé is considered shameful, immodest and disrespectful towards older family members particularly the male relatives. Women in the village regarded city girls who speak to their fiancé's and stay with them in the same room in front of their fathers and brothers and even go out with them as behaya - 'immodest' and 'disrespectful'. Younger women in the village are always taught by their older female relatives to escape and hide themselves whenever they see their fiancé's, because their fiancé's might capture them and "do bad things" to them which would bring shame to their menfolk. Since most girls are betrothed before they reach the legal age for marriage, their marriage xutba is not read until the time of their wedding itself. Thus the engaged couple are legally and religiously banned from seeing each other. On the whole, even if a marriage xutba is read and the engaged man and woman are religiously and legally bound to each other, it is considered a great shame for the girl and her family if she loses her virginity during the engagement while she is in her father's house. It proves the immodesty of the girl who could not wait until her wedding night. Sometimes when a girl has reached the legal age for marriage she is betrothed legally. Then, because she is mature and is 'religiously lawful' to her fiancé, her mother might allow her to sit with her fiancé for a few minutes without the male members of the household being informed. The mother usually sits with them in the same room or sits behind the door of the room where they are and is therefore able to control what they do from behind the door. I was told that one day while a mother was sitting behind the door listening and watching her daughter and son-in-law carefully during just such an engagement visit, she heard the boy swear to the girl that, by God, he was going to take her clothes off... Immediately the mother kicked at the door and burst in. The son-in-law



escaped through a window, but the girl was beaten violently by her mother.

At the end of the engagement - ādāxlā-māx - the male relatives of the groom come again to the bride's house to have maslahat čāyi - 'expedient tea' - with the bride's guardian. At this ceremony the boy's family asks permission (ijāza) for the wedding proper and also checks the contracted amount of the marriage settlements. Sometimes the boy's relatives do not keep their promises about the fixed amount of the marriage settlements and attempt to give less, in which case the girl's father resists, and on the advice and at the discretion of the village grey-beards, they eventually come to an agreement.

As mentioned above, a girl is expected to be uninvolved and passive throughout the negotiation of her marriage; her passive behaviour is repeated during her wedding ceremony. A few days before her wedding, the bride, along with one of her guardians and a female relative, usually an older married sister (who will be her representative to express the bride's consent to the marriage contract to the religious leader) goes along with the bridegroom and his male and female kin, to a notary public's office in the nearby town to complete the marriage contract. This occasion, as women reported, is the most embarrassing moment for them. For the first time the young bride encounters her future spouse and his relatives who often make her walk in front of them in order to see her height and the way she carries herself - whether she limps, for example. In the notary public's office, when the mullā - 'religious leader' - announces the amount and terms of payment of the 'mahr' and tells her three times that so-and-so's son has the intention of marrying her and asks for consent, a modest bride is expected to keep silent and leave it to her guardians or older female kin to answer. After the conclusion of the marriage contract in the town, however, the bride and the women who accom-

pany her and one of the older female kin of the bridegroom, are taken to the public hāmām - 'bath' - in the town where the girl is given the wedding bath - galin hāmāmi. Her own relatives do all the washing for her, sometimes mentioning to her some important points about the consummation of marriage, while the boy's relative looks at her body carefully to spot any physical defect.

On the night before the wedding night which is called xīnā yāxdi gejasi - 'the night of henna' - the bride is made to sit down in front of two women who decorate and paint her entire hands and feet with henna. On the morning of the wedding day, the yenga - the woman who will supervise the consummation of her marriage, does the bride's eyebrows and hair ceremonially and dresses her with jewellery and bridal costume. On all these occasions which cover a period of three or four days, the girl feels embarrassed, sitting mute with her head down as if she is not really alive at all.

On the evening of the wedding, six or seven female relatives of the bridegroom, along with large number of the male population of the village, come to take the bride to her new in-laws' home. The bride is heavily wrapped in a white veil and another thick and heavy šāl - 'shawl' - is also spread over her veil to give her extra concealment to her made-up face and bodily features so that no man among the companions will be able to catch even a slight glimpse of her. Before she leaves her father's house, her father, brothers and paternal uncle advise her and remind her of all she has learned about modest and respectful manners which are very important and to which she must pay attention very carefully in her in-laws' household in order to get settled in marriage properly. The male relatives hold her arms while she is strictly covered and they march her around the household oven (the mud-brick one sunk in the ground) for a few rounds until the recommendations and words

of advice are over. The recommendations are as follows:

Nanam bājim g'iz galin	my mother, my sister, my bride
Al ayāgi düz galin	may your hands and feet be straight and true
yeddi oġlān istaram bi dānādā q'iz galin	may you bear seven sons and one daughter for your new family
q'izim oġilli q'izli olāsān mālli dōllati olāsān ayāgunān dōlat āpārāsān	My daughter be fruitful be wealthy and fortunate take wealth and fortune as you depart
gaynānuvīn gaynātuvin süzünda sālehinda olāsān	be modest obedient and respectful to your father and mother-in-law

After that, a little boy comes and encircles the bride's waist with a shawl, putting 1 Toman (16 pence) under her tongue - 'dil ālti' - to symbolize the bride taking wealth and fortune to her in-laws' house. Then she is guided in and out of the courtyard door, passing under a Quran three times. The bride is helped on her journey to her husband's house by being given the light of a paraffin lamp from behind by her brother. She must be completely passive on this walk. Two of the groom's female relatives held her arms and make her move. She should show no eagerness in going to her husband's house. In other words, she must walk reluctantly and actually have to be forced, otherwise she is considered immodestly lustful for her husband. Zahrā who had been married two months previously to an outsider was said not to have waited to be lifted into a coach which was to carry her to her in-laws' house. When her brother went to hold her arms and help her to get into the bus he noticed that she had already seated herself in the coach. People teased the bride and her family, saying how immodest and fond of marriage she must be! Her brother hit her

on her head in the coach because she had not felt embarrassed and ashamed.

When a bride arrives at her in-laws' door, a big copper tray is placed on the doorstep and as the bride enters the house she steps on it, signifying that she will be as strong and hard as copper to tackle the huge duties and hard work expected from a bride in her in-laws' house and will never fall ill. All the village women irrespective of whether they have been invited or not, gather in the courtyard, in front of the room's door and windows to see the bride's face in the 'face demonstration' - üz görsatmah. After a while the shawl covering her face is drawn aside to display her face to the people. The bride shuts her eyes and keeps her head down while people look at her face. The uninvited people leave the house after seeing the bride's face, and the invited ones all sit down except for the bride: from the beginning her sitting in her husband's house should be with permission only. This act is a mark of respect for her new family. It shows that she is a respectful daughter-in-law who will never do anything without her in-laws' permission. If they permit she will sit down and take a rest, otherwise she will not. So, she stands waiting until her father or older brother-in-law comes over and gives her the formal permission to sit down - diz dāyāgi. At this point in the ceremonies, her face is again covered with the shawl and her father-in-law comes to stand at the threshold and gives the diz dāyāgi:

qızım galinim  
ayāğunān dōlat gatirasan

oğilli gizli olāsān

Mālli dōllati olāsān

sana bir gāmiş verream 'aylas'

My, daughter, my bride,

I hope you have brought

fortune to our house,

may your own son and

daughter

be wealthy and fortunate

I present you with a cow

'sit down'.



A bride's passivity in the consummation of her marriage on the wedding night has been discussed in previous pages. I have suggested that the passive role she plays on her wedding is due to lack of information about the consummation of a marriage and to resulting sex problems. Besides, one overriding purpose in a wedding is to prove a bride's family's honour and to show people that her parents were able to fulfil their duties well in protecting their daughter's hymen which is to be taken only at her wedding and by her husband. Therefore, other people's total management of her wedding and her own lack of information about virginity and intercourse make the bride a completely passive being at her wedding. After the wedding takes place, a bride and bridegroom are kept in gardah - 'the wedding room' - for three days continuously, for the family members all know that they have had sexual relations and the bridegroom and more particularly the bride feel embarrassed to be seen by anyone until the matter has been forgotten a little. Their food is given to the couple through the door, usually by older married sisters, until on the fourth day after the wedding the bride's female kin come to her home to deliver her Jehez. One or two women go to the gardah, do her hair and do her make-up, giving a candle to her and take her out of the gardah. They accompany her to another room where all the boy's and girl's relatives wait to see the bride's face again after the consummation of marriage. Again she becomes an object of display and admiration, sitting in a corner heavily veiled and silent, gazing at the ground. The demonstration and admiration goes on for two or three months until all the boy's and all the girl's relatives and friends from inside and from beyond the village have seen her 'face'.

For the first few days, the bride hardly talks and on the fourth or fifth day after the wedding she is accompanied by a female relative to her father's house to be washed ceremonially as well as to see to all her needs. Her silence and passivity does not end even at this stage; it continues for years, even

after separation from her in-laws.

### The new bride's place in the extended family:

An important factor which affects the status of women is family structure: in a nuclear family a woman may only be subordinate to her own husband but in an extended family she is placed under severe restrictions and authority imposed by many male kin and by female members of the family who have gained some say in the decision-making of the family by virtue of their old age.<sup>1</sup>

The basic structure of the family in Doniq is this extended kin-group which contains father, mother, unmarried children and married sons with their wives and children. It is very rare for a man to take his wife to a separate household. For various reasons a new couple must live with their older relatives if only in the first years of marriage. In the first place, a man is economically unable to set up a separate establishment for himself. He has to live with his father and brothers in the same household and help them in the fields for a number of years after marriage, until he gains sufficient economic independence to set up a separate home for his family. Secondly, since his father spends money on his marriage, the young couple have an obligation to stay with the boy's parents for a few years in order to compensate for his father's contribution to his marriage by his work on the land and his wife's labour in the household. Thirdly, they are young and inexperienced, and it is believed that unless a new bride works under the direction of her mother-in-law for some years and unless, similarly, her husband learns husbandry and agriculture under the guidance of his father or older married brothers, the new

1. William J. Goode, Xānavādeh va Jameh, translated from English to Persian by Vidā Nāsehi (Behnām), (Tehran, 1352 Sh.); Jam chid Behnām, Sāxtehāye Xānavādeh va xišā-vandī dar Iran (Tehran, 2536 šāhāšāhi); William J. Goode, World Revolution and Family Pattern (London, 1963); Louise Lampere, "Strategies, cooperation and conflict among women in domestic groups", in Lampere and Rosaldo (eds.) op. cit., pp. 97-112.

couple would not be an ideal husband and wife or be able to set up and run an efficient and stable household. Finally, it is considered shameful for a young man to betray his father, mother and brothers and leave his parents alone and without help in their old age, by going away to live with a strange woman in a separate household. In other words, it is not, in general, acceptable to village people that a strange woman could and should destroy the unity and loyalty of mother-son, father-son and brothers, especially in the period immediately after marriage and before the young couple have children. Therefore, a man who suggests moving or tries to move to a separate household is ridiculed and teased by his fellow workers and the village people, who say that a strange woman has become to him sweeter and dearer than his two parents. He is taunted by the saying that

"a father and mother can never be born again, but wives are easy to find and one can change many in one day."

His wife is also ridiculed and introduced as the one who wanted so early to be the owner of Tah piti - 'the whole pot'. Generally, the woman who tries to separate her husband from his family is referred to by people as Tah piti istiyan, indicating that in an extended establishment where several families live together, a small pot of food has to be distributed among many individuals who either do not receive a share or even if they do receive it, find it very insufficient. Therefore a woman who hurries to separate her husband from his family is believed to be discontented with her small share and to want the whole pot for herself. In other words, she is not a contented wife and will not put up with her husband. Another interpretation is that she wants to be the controller of the pot herself and to be a divider and 'share giver' rather than waiting to receive a share from her older female in-laws.

A young couple usually have to live with their older relatives at least until they have had two or three children. Therefore, a new bride, especially when she is married outside her kin-group, enters an extended family where there is not the slightest sentimental attachment between her and the strange members of the household or even her husband. In fact, she enters her husband's family as a servant of her in-laws. A new bride is often referred to among Doniq people as kaniz - 'maidservant' - of whom extreme modesty and subservience is expected by all family members. The description Campbell gives of the position of a newly married woman among the Sarakatsan of Greece shows it to be practically indetical to that of a bride in Doniq:

"The essential fact is that the new bride is subordinate to all other adults in the extended family. Even the five year-olds try with varying success to boss the 'bride'... The bride takes most of her orders from her mother-in-law under whose critical and watchful direction she works... Her behaviour is extremely modest..."

Extreme obedience, modest behaviour and hardwork are, however, elements which establish a new bride in her in-laws' household. To start her relationship with her in-laws on a good footing she must be prepared to take orders and carry out requests from any members of the household - father, married, unmarried brothers and sisters and other more senior brides of the family. Any hard or unpleasant tasks are delegated to her. If fuel is to be made outside the home, water to be carried or clothes to be washed at the river, the new bride is certain to be given the job. She should never express her tiredness which is regarded as a sign of disobedience, immodesty, and inefficiency.

In addition, a hayali - modest and obedient - bride is ex-

1. Campbell, op. cit., p. 64.



pected to seclude herself and maintain pardah from her husband's family members in accordance with their sex and age. For the first months after entering her husband's house, a new bride feels ashamed to show herself to the male members of the household, though her relations with womenfolk are gradually relaxed. Even though as a bride, she is expected to display her ability to work hard to her in-laws as soon as possible, the feeling of embarrassment and shame does not allow her to be very active or to prove her efficiency. However, after she has adjusted herself to her husband's house to some extent, she starts to take orders. The longer she is obedient and passive, the more hayāli and ehtirāmni - 'modest and respectful' - she is considered to be. All the actions of a bride - sitting, talking, eating, laughing, going out and so on and so forth - should be carried out only with permission. When she laughs, she immediately looks at her older in-laws lest they may have regarded her as an immodest and disrespectful bride. Except on necessary occasions, she hardly talks in front of them. When someone asks her name, age, or anything related to her own life, she looks at her mother-in-law or other older female in-laws to answer the question. A bride's 'sitting place' and 'intervals of sitting' also specify her modesty. A modest bride is not expected to sit down at all until she is permitted to do so. Sitting down indicates that she is not at her in-laws' service. Even if she has nothing to do, she should stand at the door step, meaning that she is always ready and at service to perform whatever they may order. If she sits down for a moment, she is teased by her in-laws who say that she has come to take her ease there. And when she sits down out of necessity, her place is at the lower end of the room.

Adorning herself and wearing clean and new clothes will be only for her wedding and for one or two days afterwards. She cannot change her clothes, comb her hair and, in short, groom herself even to a slight degree or it will be thought that she is doing so in order to attract her male in-laws (father and

brothers-in-law). If she attends to herself, her mother-in-law complains to everybody that her daughter-in-law does nothing but titivate and bedeck herself without leaving any time to do housework. An informant who had been married for six months said,

"When I had been married for two months I got money from my husband to go and get my eye-brows done. When the qā ṣālān - 'the woman who does eye-brows' - had started, my mother-in-law arrived, swearing at me and saying wasn't it shameful for a new bride to go to another household to do her eye-brows. Where is your hayā and abiri - 'modesty' and 'shame'? My mother-in-law said. That was all. I never did my eye-brows any more."

It is considered shameful for a bride to be seen wearing make-up in front of her in-laws. A mother-in-law who had recently been brought a daughter-in-law answered very proudly to the question of whether 'her bride' ever wore make-up or jewellery which is usually brought to her as presents by her natal and marital families.

"No, she is very simple and hayālī like myself. She has only used them once, on her wedding day. There's an old saying that a bride comes to the ojāx - finds the house which is suitable for her."

Despite the fact that a bride is unable to attend to herself out of fear of being accused of trying to attract her male relatives or of being considered immodest, when she is taken to a party, she is dressed up and heavily jewelled even if it means borrowing the belongings of other in-laws, in order to show her off to people. All this is done because she is regarded as her in-laws' honour until she gives birth to children. It is also done to demonstrate to people that the bride's parents have not been mistaken in choosing a family and spouse for their daughter and that she has been lucky and is looked after very well by her in-laws. In reality, the same daughter-in-law might lead

a very hard life with her in-laws within the privacy of their home. On normal days, the only indication to her being a young newly married woman is the colour of her clothes. Generally, a woman who is still young and has not been surrounded with children wears bright and relatively elaborate clothes, but gradually as she gives birth to children and her children grow up, her clothes change to less bright colours and more sombre designs.

A modest daughter-in-law never refers to anything about sexuality, marriage, conjugal relationships, pregnancy and childbirth while her in-laws are present. If she is asked questions about these topics in front of her older kin, she either keeps silent or manages to avoid the questions with her eyes. When I asked Jamilah who had been married for two years and had a son what her son's name was, because her older female relatives were present, she blushed and bent her head down, answering very quietly that she didn't know. This situation is also the case generally with strange younger and older women. Out of respect for older women, younger ones never refer to any topic involving sex while the former are present.

As long as a bride lives with her in-laws, she is not allowed to use anything without permission. If she wants, for instance, to make a cup of tea for herself, she asks her mother-in-law if she may take the tea-pot and how much tea and sugar she may use. Ideally and in practice also, a bride should be given things to eat, but should not 'take' them. To take them represents an autonomous, self-willed nature and carelessness to older people. At meal-time, she sits a few yards away from the sūfra - (people usually eat on the ground at a table cloth) behind her mother-in-law and her share is 'given' to her on a piece of bread. Her hands should never be seen to stretch to the sūfra and take food for herself. She usually serves the meal and leaves the room, waiting in the courtyard until her in-laws finish eating and then she eats whatever is left over

by them. It is not important to them if there is enough left over or not. Sometimes if the bride is asked to stay in the room while her male in-laws are present, she feels embarrassed to eat her share of food in front of them. She either keeps it in her hand until her male in-laws finish their meal and leave the room, and then she eats it, or she leaves the room and eats it outside in the courtyard. If she does have to eat it in front of them, she is very careful not to make a sound or look very eager. While she holds her veil with one hand over her face, with the other hand she lifts her food behind her veil very modestly and gently. If she eats her food with the slightest sound, her mother-in-law reproaches her, making fun of her because she has uncovered her face in front of her male in-laws and eaten her food in such a shameless manner. If she does not have enough food she cannot ask for more. Her haya and shame does not allow her to ask for more food. When she feels hungry she must not go towards the bread container - Tābāg. All food stuffs are locked up in a big wooden chest, the key of which is always kept between a mother-in-law's breasts. When the latter goes out, she notes the exact appearance of everything in the household so that she can tell if her daughter-in-law is an honest and truly modest girl.

An informant who had lived for six years with her in-laws described the behaviour of her in-laws and her seclusion and restrictions as follows:

"A daughter-in-law's stomach must be a small one - gōdani kičih olār. It is not for her to touch anything in her in-laws' house especially the food stuffs. My mother-in-law used to give me two loaves of bread a day. If one day I asked for permission to take an extra one, she refused and went to the neighbours and told them that I was a gōdani bōyiyh - greedy and big stomach bride. When my father-in-law bought meat and other special foods she used to prepare it herself. She never allowed me to prepare any food in case I took some. When she went out she used to count the



"bread. If the bread container was out of place a bit, she had a big quarrel with me, calling me a thief and behayā."

It should be borne in mind that an older woman in the role of a 'mother' does not behave in the same manner as she behaves in the role of a 'mother-in-law'. When her own married daughter comes over, she hands over the key of the chest to her telling her to use anything she likes. She feeds her daughter very well and when she is going back to her in-laws' house the mother prepares food for the daughter to take with her.

When a bride goes to fetch water or wash clothes at the river, her younger in-laws are sent along behind to watch her to see if she goes in the right direction or goes out of her way to her relatives' houses or any other places. They also watch to see what sort of women she gets in touch with and what she says. Although she is allowed to go out to carry out necessary jobs, she is not allowed to talk to women outside the home, for she might be encouraged by other women not to obey and respect her in-laws, to show laziness in the performance of her duties, to ask for more clothes and jewellery and encourage her husband to separate himself from his parents. When one talks outside the home to a daughter-in-law who lives with her husband's family, one feels unease lest one of the woman's in-laws should see her talking to a strange woman. Or if she talks, it is only very carefully and she is extremely reserved in conversation lest she should refer to something about her relations with her in-laws which might endanger their honour and her husband's unity with his family. Even though she is not treated well, she is not expected to say anything about it to anyone, even her own parents. It is believed that a daughter-in-law who carries the private affairs of the household beyond the home and discloses the secrets of her in-laws is not a modest and respectful woman and must be separated from her in-laws.

Another important sign of respect which conspicuously represents and emphasizes a daughter-in-law's modesty and deference towards her in-laws is covering herself with a veil or scarf in their presence. A hayālī daughter-in-law is one who covers and conceals her body with her veil, not only in the presence of male relatives but also when she is with female kin. She must not show them any part of her body but her face, hands and feet. Women's daily clothing corresponds to this norm in some extent. Clothes consist of : Trousers - tumān-cut very full at the waist and loose over the thighs and at the ankles (like pyjamas) to hide the legs. The tumān is usually made of light-coloured printed cotton, because it is used inside the household, but for out-door wear the woman changes into the šālvār - 'trousers'- of darker colour and thicker fabric. Over the tumān or šālvār is worn a dress - 'don' which hangs loosely over the body, and has long sleeves and a high neck. The dress also should not be of transparent fabric or fit tightly to show bodily features. Usually a jilliqā - 'vest' - or a zāket - 'coat' - is worn over the dress to give extra concealment. Any other clothes such as a skirt with stockings or trousers with blouse are considered immodest and shameful even for little girl children. A 45 year-old informant said,

"My sister, who has been living in Tehran for years and is very well-off, fetched me to stay with them for a few weeks. One day visitors came over who were all modern and shameless city women. My sister was ashamed to let them see me in my dress and trousers. Before they came over, she asked me to take off my šālvār and don and wear a skirt and stockings and do my hair in the same style as the shameless women do in the city. But I didn't want to be behayā like them, so I refused to do so. My sister kept me in a cupboard until the visitors left."

Women of the village criticized the young girls and daughters-in-law in the city who wear such tight skirts or trousers or sometimes even go without stockings so that all their hayālārī

and bodily features are obvious and known to the people and to their older relatives. They also called the younger city women immodest and shameless since they go to public baths and wash themselves in front of older relatives and strange women.

As a matter of fact, the women's everyday outfit - the dress with trousers is the basic minimum bodily concealment which is required for all occasions and for all ages. The most modest woman is the one who wears the maximum bodily concealment using the veil and čarqad - 'scarf'. The veil as mentioned before, is vital when a woman leaves home. Without it a woman is named dös bāš āčix - 'naked of breast and head' and her own honour and that of her family is endangered. But the čad-irā - 'veil' - is also required to be worn as a sign of respect inside the household in the presence of older relatives. When she is with older females, a young daughter-in-law wears her veil covering the whole of her body except her face. In front of older male kin (father and older brothers-in-law) concealment of the face also becomes necessary. A respectful bride should never show her face to the older male members of her husband's family. There are women whose older male in-laws have never seen their faces even after the women have been married a number of years and have had many children. A woman married for ten years who had had five children, said,

"During five years when I stayed with my in-laws my husband's father and older brothers could never see any part of my face. I always refused to eat in front of them lest they saw my face. Even though I have been their daughter-in-law for many years and have many children, I still cover my face in front of them. Today my father-in-law was invited to have a meal with us; I didn't take anything in his presence, though I was starving and was very thirsty. I have always respected him. He has never seen my face."

Some older women told me that today's daughters-in-law have

become very ābirisiz and ehtirāmsiz - 'shameless' and 'disrespectful'. After giving birth to one or two children, they no longer cover their faces in front of their in-laws. A mother-in-law complained to other women about her daughter-in-law that she didn't respect her father-in-law any more. She neither covered her face in his presence nor even drew her veil over the upper part of her body when she fed her baby, she did not even sit so that her back was towards him. She put her baby to her breast right in front of her father-in-law. Another woman who took part in the conversation said that it was because of the woman's husband's attitude that his daughter-in-law did not conceal herself and respect him. If he had behaved severely and in such a way to overawe her, she would never have dared to show him disrespect.

A daughter-in-law hardly ever initiates a conversation with her older male in-laws and when the latter talk to her, she bends her head and looks down and responds quietly. A woman's position in her in-laws' household is not identified with the status of her husband. She has an independent position and relationship with her in-laws which varies in accordance with her own age and the age and status of her relatives. While her activities and relationships are restricted in regard to older relatives her behaviour towards younger ones is relatively relaxed and without restraint. A daughter-in-law does not conceal her face in the presence of her younger male in-laws and sometimes even does not bother to cover the upper part of her body with her ĉādīrā. Most of her outside affairs are managed by her younger brothers-in-law. She complains to them about her other in-laws' behaviour towards her. But this relatively free and friendly relationship does not continue after the younger brother-in-law gets married. After his marriage, even if he is younger than his brother's wife, their relationships become more formal and restrained. She stops talking and joking to him so freely. She stands up to show her respect when he enters the room just as she does for other older female and male



kin, and covers the upper part of her body or at least covers her head and hair with a scarf in his presence. In short, although, since she is older, and therefore does not maintain such strict social and physical distance from her younger brothers-in-law as she does from her older male kin, she does not mix with them too freely; if she did, she would be open to accusations of scandal.

If a young newly married woman tolerates all the restrictions imposed on her activities in the extended family - properly observing the norms of 'respect' and 'modesty' towards all family members, she wins their acceptance and is gradually able to feel settled in the family. Otherwise her condition becomes miserable and unsettled. In most cases, because brides marry at a very early age and are inexperienced, and more important, because they have such heavy and numerous duties expected of them, they are unable to carry them out as required. The result is that they lead a very unpleasant life. They are often threatened with repudiation and ill-treated by all the family members - husband, father, mother and brothers-in-law and are frequently sent to their fathers' household. Most parents in the village agree that it is normal for every newly married woman to lead a hard life in her husbands' house until she adjusts with her in-laws, and they always worry and are concerned about the in-laws' treatment and behaviour towards their daughters. Thus if parents sympathize with and support their daughter whenever she is maltreated and sent back, she cannot adjust herself to her husband's house and has to get divorced. Therefore when a daughter is ill-treated and sent back to her father or brother's household, her own male relatives intentionally reproach her, putting all the blame on her and suggesting that she herself must have been guilty since she has been punished by her in-laws. Her in-laws would be out of their minds to treat her badly if she has been carrying out all their orders and treating them with respect.

### Husband and wife:

When a young couple live in an extended family, out of respect for the older people among the household's relatives, they are expected to show no attachment to each other. In the presence of her in-laws, a woman behaves towards her husband simply as if she were a stranger to him. The slightest contact with her husband - addressing him at length or speaking to him even briefly, is regarded as disrespectful and immodest. A modest woman should concern herself more with the desires and orders of the group than with her husband. When, for instance, she wants to make sure if he is at home, she does not dare to call him, but gently and quietly looks for him in the rooms and the stable and elsewhere. In front of her in-laws, when she wants to refer to her husband, she does not refer to him by his name, but by his mother's or father's name - āgāmin oğlu - 'my master's son', or xānımın oğlu - 'my lady's son' and her husband refers to her as galünün - 'your daughter-in-law', or as her father's daughter. Once a woman referred to her husband by his name in the presence of an older woman who was accompanied by her daughters-in-law. The older woman resented this and told the younger one that she was very rude because she had not taken her into account at all and set a bad example for the young daughters-in-law. In the presence of older male in-laws, in addition to keeping social distance from her husband, a woman also maintains a physical distance from him. She might stay in the same room with her husband while her female in-laws are present, but as soon as her father or brothers-in-law arrive she leaves the room where her husband is and stands in the passage way or sits in a separate room.

A young couple usually have a separate room for sleeping. At bedtime, they avoid sleeping in the same bed lest one of his relatives should come to fetch something from the room and see

them in the same bed, which would be considered very shameful for the woman. She makes up the beds of all the family members and waits in a corner of the room until they fall asleep and then she leaves for her room. In the morning she gets up before dawn before her in-laws are awake in order to avoid being seen in private with her husband.

A young daughter-in-law, while living with her in-laws, has to refer her problems to her in-laws rather than to her own husband. If she needs something, for instance money to purchase something or if she has to go the public hamām - 'bath' - in the town, or to see the doctor, she asks her mother-in-law to report her needs to the older male members of the household and ask them to assist her. Without permission from her in-laws she cannot ask her husband to do anything for her. Her room is always searched to see if her husband has bought something for her without their permission. A young married woman who had been living with her in-laws told me,

"Here in the village a bride really marries all her husband's family members rather than just her husband. The best period of life - when you are young and newly-married - is spent in obedience to your in-laws and in being always at their beck and call. During the day, you have to be a stranger to your husband - you mustn't talk to him, look at him, or ask him to help you - as if you don't know him at all, and during the night you go to the room at 2 or 3 o'clock when he is asleep and you yourself are very tired... My mother and sisters-in-law (HBW/HZ) always search my room and my husband's pocket to see if he has bought something eatable or some other little gifts. If he buys something, they all show strong disapproval. A few months ago he bought this bracelet for me without informing them; they all had a big row with me."

Sometimes, a daughter-in-law who lives with her in-laws and whose activities are incredibly restricted by the latter, tends to hide things in her parents' home. When her husband buys

something for her without the knowledge of his family or if she buys some item out of her own secret money,<sup>1</sup> she asks her mother or married sister who lives in a nuclear household, to hide it for her until she finds an excuse to introduce it into household use. Quite often the secret purchase is given to her by her parents on some appropriate occasion (such as New Year) along with other articles.

Some women reported that it is not uncommon for some in-laws to stay awake in order to listen to their daughter-in-law when she is alone with her husband to find out what she talks about. They try to discover whether she reports to her husband the affairs going on in the household during the day or mentions how she is treated by them. A daughter-in-law discovered complaining is usually called geja mullāsi - a mullā who gives a sermon during the night - indicating that she reports everything to her husband during the night when she is alone with her husband to encourage him to separate himself from his family.

After she has moved away from her in-laws and she and her husband have set up an independent household, most of the restrictions placed on the activities and movements of a woman are relaxed. She is then subservient only to her husband and behaves respectfully towards him. In Doniq, in terms of both religion and culture, marriage gives a man power over his wife's domestic labour, sexuality and obedience to him personally; and to a wife marriage gives the right to be provided for by her husband. A woman is considered an ideal and virtuous wife if she never disobeys or disagrees with her husband. In all family and social situations, the husband assumes the position of leadership and has absolute authority over his wife. The wife must submit and unquestionably accept whatever

1. Most women normally have only small sums of money given to them by their natal families on certain occasions (see p. ).



decisions are made by her husband and respect him at all times. It is not for her to address him by his name for he is older and is her sāhib - 'guardian' - and should be respected. She addresses him as āgā - 'master' - or by her sons' names - so and so's father. When she talks to him, she uses sūz - 'you' - which is the plural form of the pronoun and therefore considered more respectful than the singular or familiar form san, which he uses when talking to her. He disdains referring to his wife by her name. He either refers to her as ōv - 'house' (her domain); or ūšāxlār - 'children'; and addresses her by saying to her 'oh' or 'hoy'.

In private she stands up and greets him as he enters the room. She spreads his mattress out for him, putting bolsters behind him for him to lean on. She discusses the affairs of the family and puts forward her suggestions in a respectful and timid fashion. She never openly contradicts her husband, although she may ask her relatives to intervene on her behalf. In public and in front of strangers a wife's relationship with her husband becomes more formal and distant. As Campbell notes from the public relationship of a husband and wife among the Sarakatsani,

"The husband addresses his wife in a stern severe voice. Requests and commands are barked out in sharp phrases. It is important for a man's self-regard that other men should see that he is master in his own house. In public the wife is meek and modest, silent and submissive. She does not smile at him or laugh with him before strangers... and must never use tones of mockery or abuse towards her husband."<sup>1</sup>

If they have to walk in the village or in the town, the wife follows her husband two or three steps behind in deference to him.

1. Campbell, op. cit., p. 276.

While obedience and submissiveness on the part of the wife is a moral imperative and is regarded as a virtue, the same attributes in a man are observed with humourous contempt. If a man is known to be slightly influenced by his wife, he is ridiculed and is considered to lack virility. In no affairs should a man inform or consult his wife, neither has the latter any right to ask about his affairs, especially his outside relationships. If a man is heard consulting his wife he is regarded as safih - 'a fool': for women are generally believed to be irrational - agilsiz and safih - who cannot distinguish very well between bad and good. There is a saying that forty women do not have the wisdom of one black hen: the black hen is known among the villagers as the most absent-minded, giddy and crazy hen. In addition, it is thought that if women had been meant to be wise and rational they would have been provided like men with a hulqum - 'Adam's apple' - which is considered to be the source of zeal and wisdom in men. Women, however, are believed to be naturally unpredictable, deceitful, evil, cunning and always working for division and disturbance. For a description of a woman's nature, a male informant always referred to one of the sermons of the village mullā to the effect that

"the Prophet Mohammad has said that in the world there are three things one mustn't trust: a sword which always kills its own owner; a horse who throws its owner down and also a woman who betrays her own sāhib - 'guardian'."

Thus a man should never believe the word of a woman or listen to his wife, but do exactly the opposite of whatever his wife may advise him. Women reported that their husbands always disagreed with them telling them that if a woman says yoghurt is white, a man should say it is black. The men of the Tāt tribe who are known to have limited consultations with their wives about family matters, are teased and referred to as safih - 'fools', beqeyrat - 'zealless' and arvād āğizli - 'effeminate'.

Of course the women of the Doniq community are not unique in being considered unpredictable, irrational and foolish. Such perceptions are quite general. In most cultures and among many communities women are seen and come to see themselves as "idiosyncratic"; "irrational"; "less intellectual" and "expressive".<sup>1</sup> In this regard, Michelle Z. Rosaldo suggests that the "expressive" character and irrationality of women,

"is as much a cultural interpretation, or 'cliche' as an accurate reflection of the ways in which women act and think... The structure and nature of social relationships themselves influence cultural perception and modes of thinking... It reflects, not a natural or necessary endowment, but a very general cultural theme. Since women must work within a social system that obscures their goals and interests, they are apt to develop ways of seeing, feeling and acting that seem to be "intuitive" and "unsystematic" - with a sensitivity to other people that permits them to survive. They may, then be "expressive". But it is also important to realize that cultural stereotypes order the observer's own perception. It is because men enter the world of articulated social relations that they appear to us as intellectual, rational or instrumental; and the fact that women are excluded from that world makes them think and behave in another world... In so far as men, in their institutionalized relations of kinship, politics, and so on, define the public order, women are their opposite. Where men are classified in terms of ranked, institutional positions, women are simply women and their activities, interests and differences receive only idiosyncratic note... From the point of view of the larger social system, they are seen as deviants or manipulators; because systems of social classification rarely make room for their interests, they are not publicly understood. But women defy the ideas of the male order. They may be defined as virgins, yet be necessary to the group's regeneration. They may be excluded from authority, yet exercise all sorts of informal power. Their status may be derived from their male relations, yet they outlive their husbands and fathers. And in so far as the presence of women does introduce such contradictions, women will be seen as anomal-

1. See Gordon's report from pre-revolutionary Algeria op. cit., pp. 13-14; Rice, op. cit., p. 111; and Campbell, op. cit.

"ous and defined as dangerous, dirty... as something to be apart."<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, any interference in the male order or resistance to the rules that they set out is regarded as disobedience and is met with physical violence by the men. It is very unusual for a wife to go against her husband's orders to the extent of absolutely refusing to do what he tells her to do. But any day-to-day disagreements between a man and his wife over 'trifles' are taken care of by the wife's receiving a beating with a stick. Wife-beating is a generally accepted practice in the village. It usually takes place to emphasize the power of the husband in the family and to stress his manliness to people outside the family and it reflects the subordination of the wife. A man who is serious and severe in his family builds up a special reputation and respect among the men of the community. I was able to talk to two middle-aged men who were famous for wife-beating in the village. One of them felt ashamed to confess the fact directly to me. He said,

"God has already punished a woman by creating her a 'woman'. She has already been beaten by God, who has sentenced her to be always at her husband's service and to do his biddings. Therefore, she doesn't need to be stuck with a stick."

Another man who seemed more proud of being a 'man' and of beating his wife said,

"If a woman in the village is not beaten up, she doesn't listen and obey her husband properly. Every man in the village has got a kosso - a stick about one metre long always kept ready on the top of the sitting room door. When the wife forgets her duties a little or forgets her place, she is given two or three whacks with the stick which help her to recollect her duties very quickly."

1. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lampere, "Women, culture and society: a theoretical overview", in Rosaldo and Lampere (eds.) op. cit., pp. 17-42, especially pp. 21-35.



Most female informants bore witness to this claim and showed me many marks on their bodies which had been caused by beatings. Among the men's community there is a popular saying that women in general, are good for three affairs: work, copulation and beating. In the village shop, the men boast to each other that if their wives were to stand up to them, they would break their bones into pieces. They learn from each other how they beat their wives and what methods to use. Women of Doniq accept the right of a husband to strike his wife. In talking to me they said that a husband has a legal and religious right to beat his wife whenever he chooses and may do whatever he wishes, even kill her, because he provides for her. But a woman has no right even to defend herself. If a woman does so, she becomes disgraced in this world and will never be forgiven in the next.<sup>1</sup>

When a woman has a long-standing complaint about being beaten continually by her husband, another woman will remind her that it is said in an old proverb that 'a woman should not be annoyed by her husband's stick but should take it as if she is presented with a flower - ar āgāji gūl āgāji'; or other women may comfort her by telling her that they have been taught by their grandmothers that a woman should be beaten by her husband in order to become an 'ideal' wife and to be able to stay in strange households. Otherwise she will not be kept in her in-laws' or husband's household but will be sent away to her father's house; or sometimes a woman who receives beatings frequently is blamed by other women who say she herself is probably guilty since she is beaten so often. For if a woman carries out all the orders of her husband properly, obeys him, prepares his food and tea on time, welcomes his anger and cursing with a cheerful face and does not answer him back, she is never beaten so often. An informant said,

1. See C. Bell and H. Newby, "Husbands and wives: the dynamics of the deferential dialectic", in Barker and Allen, op. cit., pp. 152-168.

"we women in the village always work hard and yet we get beaten like donkeys. In the evening, if we prepare our husband's tea a bit late, they pick up sticks and busy themselves on our bodies. I swear by God, my husband has beaten my face so much that the bones of my face always ache."

After this woman left, her neighbour who was present said,

"She does not listen to her husband, goes to her father's house and comes back late, answers him back and doesn't have his tea and meals ready on time. That's why she is always being beaten. Several times she escaped to our house barefoot and without a veil and after she'd been in our house for a few hours, my father-in-law intervened and took her back to her husband. Why am I not beaten so often?"

In short, women I interviewed accepted the idea that the husband has a right to beat his wife. They said that it does not matter if one is beaten by one's husband and on the whole they even saw it as a good thing to be beaten if the matter was serious and important.

### Strategies to gain influence

Anthropological studies indicate that in many communities men hold positions of absolute authority and have the legitimate right to make decisions in family and social relations. Nevertheless, the women make an effort to employ a variety of indirect and subtle strategies to gain compliance from those in authority and mitigate the effects of male control. The domestic sphere belongs to the female and the tasks performed there are by right exclusive to her, so by controlling much of this domain, she becomes able to have partial control over its inhabitants, including men. As Nikki Keddie points out,

"she largely determines the quality of care she offers, which she manipulates according to her attitudes. "Poison in the stew" is the extreme female

"response to male oppression, but is reflected in dozens of less dramatic acts: an unkept house, noise when the husband is entertaining, insufficient food for guests, unruly children, and so forth, all of which cast uncomplimentary light on the husband and his supposed control over her part of his honour is defined by the degree of this control, and a woman by subtle means can undermine it."<sup>1</sup>

Another traditional response by females to subordination is manipulation of sexuality.

"The women through alluring stance and suggestive remark (traditionally a tendril of hair or the jingling of jewelry was said to be sufficient to drive a man to distraction), can entice a man away from the "rational" world of men, into the uncontrolled and unpredictable world of sensuality."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes a woman influences her husband by refusing to have sex with him or threatening to attack his masculinity and honour by showing interest in another man or acting immodestly.

Some wives follow the path of continual whining and of casting up at the men the lengths to which they go in the toil and trouble of performing those domestic duties which in turn enable the men of the family to uphold their reputation. The outcome of this kind of complaint (which is permitted within the formal framework of the society) is to remind the men of their dependence on their womenfolk and of their obligation to uphold the honour of the family in their own way by reciprocating for all the women do for them.

Another way in which influence is exercised is through female association and gossip, intrigue and ridicule which damage the

1. L. Beck and N. Keddie, "Introduction", in Beck and Keddie (eds) op. cit., p. 19.

2. Ibid.

reputation of men, bringing them "loss of face". Margery Wolf, writing about Chinese society claims that,

"The concept of face has immediacy for men in the village society and their "face" was in danger when unfavourable aspects of their behaviour were being talked about. If a woman brought her complaints against a [husband], brother-in-law or son to the women's community, each woman would bring up the topic at home, and before long it was also being discussed by the men with considerable loss of face for the culprit..."<sup>1</sup>

Influence may also be exercised by the tie a woman retains with her natal family after marriage and by the amount of property she takes from her father's household to her husband's house. Finally women appeal to the supernatural; they try witchcraft and amulets to redress the balance of authority or provide a psychological outlet for themselves. The subject of "compensatory mechanisms" used by women who completely lack authority in their social and family relationships is examined by I.M. Lewis. In his article, "Spirit Possession and Deprivation Cults" (1966), he suggests that witchcraft and spirit possession are the means by which women and other deprived and oppressed groups

"exert mystical pressures upon their superiors in circumstances of deprivation and frustration when few other sanctions are available to them."

Among the Somali, he points out,

"spirit possession... operates ... as a limited deterrent against the abuses of neglect and deprivation in a conjugal relationship which is heavily

1. M. Wolf: "Chinese Women: Old Skills in a New Context", in Rosaldo and Lamphere (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 157-172, see especially, p. 162.



"biased in favour of men."<sup>1</sup>

Among the women of Doniq some of these subtle strategies are employed, but I was told that they have not been successful or have had very little effect on the behaviour and control exerted by men. Women reported that they sometimes try to deprive their husbands of sex or refuse to cook and do household tasks, but the husbands bear bigger grudges against them after such attempts at independence and intensify their punishments. Quite often women walk out, leaving the children with their husbands. But they said that the only result of doing that is that "your face" is lost among friends and enemies and the secrets and particular relationship of your family are disclosed to people who then tease and make fun of you when they see you walking with your husband again in the village. After staying for two or three weeks in your father's house, your husband sends the grey-beards of his family to fetch you. He might change his behaviour for two or three days, but after the matter has blown over a little, he becomes the same - hamān āšdi hamān kāsā - 'the same soup, the same bowl'.

But if a woman has a large number of male relatives on her own side of the family who are economically and socially powerful and visit her frequently, taking presents to her, her husband and children, she might receive slightly different treatment and have some say in family matters.

Women also believed widely in the power and effect of witchcraft and charms in their relationships with their husbands.

1. I.M. Lewis, "Spirit Possession and Deprivation Cults", in *Man*, I (1966), pp. 307-329, p. 314. See also Robert Paine, "What is gossip about? An Alternative Hypothesis", in *Man*, 2 (1967), pp. 278-85; N. Tapper, op. cit., p. 231; Mahler, op. cit., pp. 102-3; Lampere, "Strategies, Cooperation...", in Rosaldo and Lampere (eds.), op. cit., pp. 97-112; Rosaldo, "Woman, culture and society..." in Rosaldo and Lampere (eds.) op. cit., p. 21; Friedl, "The position of women...", op. cit., p. 108; Silverman, op. cit., p. 137; and Aswad, op. cit., p. 149.

Cases were reported of some women being able by witchcraft and amulets to change the attitudes and behaviour of their husbands; bind their men to them or entice away the husbands of other women and make other women's husbands impotent. An "affection charm" which is normally kept in the bed of the husband and wife or dropped into food or cooking and fed to the husband, is believed to secure one's husband's exclusive attention and give the woman the chance to mitigate his authority and control. In any case, even if this last strategy is believed to be influential in the relationships of wife and husband, it is more a matter of superstition than of practice. It is not tried out very often.

Women usually prefer to keep secret from each other the unfavourable aspect of their husbands' behaviour in order to uphold the honour of their families. For, in addition to their husbands and to themselves, their natal families' reputation is also involved. Quite often they try to show off to each other by pretending that their husbands are different from the way they are in actuality; theirs are kind, generous with food and clothes and consult their wives about whatever they plan to do, even though the contrary may be true.

In fact, the indirect means tried or used by women among many communities, including Doniq, to exert influence on the husbands' authority and control, give more indications of women's insecurity and powerless position (and introduce them as cunning, wicked and anomalous) than of any true influence or power in decision making. Being disappointed and unable to exercise power or to satisfy their demands by appropriate and accurate methods women are, indeed, compelled to resort to deceit, guile and dissimulation, which do not give significant influence.

Dissolution of marriage:

Marriage under Islam is a civil contract, and not a sacrament so it may be terminated in divorce. However, while divorce is permitted, various legal clauses can be presented as obstacles to prevent it. A divorced woman is entitled to a prescribed period of waiting: 'iddat' which is considered to serve a double purpose: on the one hand, it will be obvious during this period if the woman is pregnant, in which case the divorce is revoked until she gives birth. On the other hand 'iddat' gives the husband an opportunity to revoke it if he wishes. In addition, a major disincentive to divorce is the forfeiting of the marriage settlement by whoever initiates divorce proceedings. If a man divorces his wife, he should not deprive her of her 'mahr' and other marriage settlements while a woman surrenders her 'mahr' to her husband in order to induce him to repudiate her. Besides the shame which a divorced person is faced with is considered to be an obstacle to divorce. Islam permits a husband to repudiate his wife at his discretion (Talāq) and against his wife's will. He has the right and option of putting an end to the marriage without any judicial interference and does not need to give his grounds for the divorce. Though, theoretically, a wife can also initiate divorce, in practice, she cannot obtain it until her husband consents. Moreover, she must resort to judicial decree and give good and satisfactory reasons for ending the marriage. Normally, a husband who wants to divorce his wife, pronounces his repudiation aloud three times on the same or different occasions. After the first or second time he may take her back without any formality, provided he does so within ninety days; otherwise she is eligible for marriage to another man. Once the husband has pronounced the divorce statement a third time, he cannot take her back as his wife until she has first been married and divorced by another man.<sup>1</sup>

1. Quran, 2:228-9-30; Levy, An Introduction to the Sociology of..., op. cit., pp. 172-6; Fyzee, Outlines of Muhammadan..., op. cit., pp. 89-91; and Bevan Jones, op. cit., pp. 143-76.

Persian civil law places some restrictions on the customary divorce procedures by making it necessary for men to offer the repudiation before witnesses in court. Even if both parties (the man and the woman) should resort to judicial interference, it is still easier for men to divorce and the wife cannot obtain divorce without his consent.<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, divorce is rarely practised. In the last fifty years there have been only three divorce cases in the village; two of which took place because of suspicions of adultery on the part of the women and the other because the husband was a pleasure-seeker who had been ill-treating his wife. Women generally believe that one's husband is determined by God and destiny and that he can not be changed under any circumstances, whether one feels happy or not. They often quoted the maxim, "God is one and the husband is one", or "the step can be changed, but the yāzi - 'fate' - cannot be altered", indicating that even if a woman should try to change her husband, her next marriage would be no better, because that is the fate God gave her. Traditionally, divorce is considered a shame and a disgrace, especially for women. A woman who gets divorced, demolishes the honour and prestige of her family and endangers not only her own opportunities for re-marriage but also the chance of good matches for her unmarried female relatives. Therefore, even if a woman leads an unhappy life, she prefers to tolerate it silently, rather than appealing for repudiation. Besides, women are usually in a dependent situation economically, working as unpaid labourers in their husbands' homes with no guarantee that their guardians (fathers or brothers) will accept them back willingly. Even if she is accepted, a divorced woman is likely to be regarded as bringing shame into her father's house; and she will be doubly unwanted, since she will have become a permanent burden, having little or no

1. See N. Coulson and D. Hinchcliffe, "Women and law reform in contemporary Islam", in Beck and Keddie, *op. cit.*, p. 44; and M.R. Ulumi, Šarh-e Qānun va Hemāyat-e xānavāde va Naqdī Bar Ān, (Tehran, 1354 sh).



chance of remarrying. Under these circumstances, very few women have the courage to ask for a divorce.<sup>1</sup> Golzār was a very young widow with three children when she got married 20 years ago from a neighbouring village to a much older widower from Doniq with five children. The step children did not get on with each other and the step father and older brother provided for the woman's children but discriminated against them. However the woman said that she tolerated this and the elderly ways of her husband who was 30 years older than she was; she had accepted his offer of marriage because her brother could not provide for her and her children, after her first husband died. However although the woman endured the behaviour of her husband and her older step-son, the latter asked her to leave their house because they could not afford to provide for her children. The woman was taken to the town by her husband to get divorced, but she cried and pleaded with him to give up the idea of divorce. For her kabin - 'dower' had been about 300 Tomān (£19), which was of no help to her and she had no male relatives who could support her. She had only one brother who was very poor and unable to provide even for his wife and six children. The woman said,

"I had stayed with my brother for two years when my first husband died. Everything was given to me and my children grudgingly. When my children asked for food, I got embarrassed to ask for it because my brother's wife used to look annoyed. Therefore, I prefer to plead with this old man to keep me rather than go to live with my brother, though I am not fond of staying in this man's house at all."

Even if religion and civil law entitle the couple to equal rights at the time of divorce, the woman, lacking economic power, are often unable to initiate divorce proceedings. On the other hand, the husband may take advantage of his economic status, the lack of economic independence of his wife and the divorce laws which discriminate in his favour, to threaten his

1. See N.E. Saadawi, The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World, translated and edited by Sherif Hetata (London, 1980), p.198.

wife with repudiation at the very slightest disagreement or sign of disobedience. Altogether the social stigma attached to divorce and the economic independence of women and the threats of the husband are important factors in women's behaviour and their control over their marital destinies. Women in Doniq, like many of their counterparts in other Muslim communities, cannot give the smallest suggestions about the choice of their husbands and have to marry whoever is chosen as an appropriate match for them. In effect they have no say either as to whether they will stay married or not. A woman is compelled to endure her marriage passively and silently when it is unhappy, and is unable to prevent her husband from repudiating her whenever he desires to do so.

One other aspect of marriage in Islam is polygamy. According to the traditional school of thinking, while plurality of marriage is impossible for a woman, a man can have up to four wives at a time. This is subject to his capacity to provide financially for all his dependents and to treat all his wives justly and equally.<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, however, no case of polygamous marriage was observed. Women did report that it is quite common for husbands to threaten their wives with the introduction of a second wife to the home, if they disobey the men or if they are barren or do not produce male heirs for their husbands. But the men do not put their words into practice. Poverty is the most important disincentive to the village men to marry more than one wife.

In short, what I have concentrated on in this chapter is the lack of control or of choice over their sexuality and marriage to which women in Doniq submit. Not only do men take strict

1. Quran, 4:2-3; Levy, *An Introduction to the...*, op. cit., pp. 145-46; Saleh, part one, op. cit., p. 39; and Galwash, op. cit., pp. 122-30.

charge of women's sexuality, behaviour and marriage; older women also who have gained superior status through their age and number of children, try to keep younger women "under their thumb".

Women's demeanour is considered the honour of their menfolk, and in order to protect this honour severe restrictions are imposed on women's movements and outside activities. To bring girls up to be chaste and marriageable constant protection are given to their hymens and to their behaviour as a whole. After they arrive at puberty they are completely hidden from the outside world, totally confined to their homes. They have no right to exert the slightest influence on the choice of their marriage partner. Their guardians are their main controllers and make the decisions about their marital destinies. A woman should accept whoever is chosen for her without any objection. The guardians see it as their absolute right to give their wards in marriage whenever and to whoever they wish.

Although it is claimed that the women's marriage settlements provide some economic status for them, in practice, the marriage settlements are no more than social obligations and symbols to legalize the sexual union of the couple and the coherence of two lineages or to reinforce the status of guardians rather than to provide real economic independence for women. Thus women are dependent on their menfolk for their slightest subsistence needs which is a substantial reason for the asymmetrical relationship between husband and wife. A woman enters her husband's house as a 'maidservant' to him and all his relatives. She must be constantly at their service and deferential to them, otherwise her marriage, which is her only economic resource, is threatened. After spending some years in service to her in-laws, she is eventually able to establish an independent household where she continues her passivity and lack of control under the authority of her husband alone. Her culture and religion command and compel her to be continually sub-

servient to and at the service of her husband and to respect him rather than be a companion to him, because her husband provides for her. In no matter is she allowed to express the slightest idea or suggestion and should she do so, it is taken as disobedience and disagreement which ought to be quelled by physical punishment. Finally, just as she is not allowed to have any say in the choice of her husband, it is not for her to decide either if she will remain married or not. Whenever her husband decides to repudiate her she must accept her fate.



## CHAPTER 4

### HOUSEWORK

The traditional and an 'ideal' domain for the women of Doniq like many of their counterparts around the world is 'home', and their major occupation is housework. Unlike the men's work which is mainly carried out in public and visible contexts, the women's work is mainly limited to a private and isolated environment invisible to the outside world. But the invisibility and apparent separateness of housework from the world outside the family does not mean that it is not important to the economy or that women play no crucial roles in the economic and social system. There are some recent critical studies dealing generally with the position of housewives and housework under capitalist modes of production which can be helpful in establishing a basis for understanding the position of housewives and the value of their work in Doniq. Although these studies are mainly concerned with the analysis of housework under highly industrialized capitalist societies and cannot be directly related to the small traditional society of Doniq, they do contain some perspectives which can be seen as representing the importance of the housework of Doniq women.

Some sections of these critiques are associated with the surplus or benefits which are appropriated by capitalists from the housework of women, or deal with the condition of women who perform domestic labour as well as playing the role of wage labourers, a combination of duties which is believed to be by no means harmonious and generates the specific dynamic of women's position. However, the first part of these general studies is not applicable to the position of Doniq women since neither the women nor their menfolk are in the direct employment of

anyone else. The second argument can be transplanted to the context of women in Doniq where, as it will be demonstrated in later chapters, women play two roles at the same time; on the one hand, they are mothers and housewives who perform heavy and time-consuming domestic routines and on the other hand they are income earners who weave carpets for long hours continuously and regularly to supplement the family's basic income - and in doing so damage themselves physically and psychologically.

Other parts of the critiques are concerned about whether housework can be regarded as a form of productive work or not or if it is a totally separate mode of production or whether it ought to be included within the general framework of capitalist modes of production. The exponents of the varying theories do not seem to agree with each other and present quite different perspectives. However, they do seem to be generally agreed that the 'family' is not only the unit of consumption, but is concerned with production as well and that housework is a necessary part of the economy. The commentators on housework under capitalism criticize those sociologists who discuss housework and the family as separate from the outside world and the rest of the economy and who regard the family as the context of consumption and therefore as unimportant. They stress that the family is of utmost productive importance and is the infrastructure of the economy as well as its superstructure. The productivity and importance of family and housework are to be found on two levels: (1) production of goods for use by the consumer; (2) supply of labour force. In fact, the commodities which are purchased by wages, are not themselves in a consumable state. Extra labour, namely 'housework' is needed to transform them into a consumable form which will in turn maintain and reinforce labour power from day to day, ready for work and production. Therefore the first economic function of the family and of housework is the maintenance and refreshment of the labour force by day-to-day service, feeding, clothing and

other necessary attention. The second contribution of the family to the economy is the supply, through (biological) reproduction of the next generation of both wage labour outside the family and of domestic labour. Thus, women play a vital role both in the reproduction and in the day-to-day maintenance and perpetuation of labour power. But it is suggested that as long as women occupy a separate world from the men within the wider social system and perform their work in a private and invisible context and are either not paid at all or somebody else receives the equivalent of their pay, the labour they perform will certainly appear unrelated to the outside world and will be considered 'non-work' and economically unimportant.<sup>1</sup>

This situation is fully evident in Doniq. Although women do not work directly in the field which is a crucial source of income, this does not mean that they do not contribute at all to the work on the land. In addition to the fact that they prepare meals and send them or take them personally to their menfolk working in the fields, two or three times a day, it is also the job of the women to carry out at home all sifting, grinding, cleaning and packing of the grain. But since they perform these agricultural tasks at home and in an invisible context, it is considered that women do not do agricultural work at all.

1. For the material about 'housework' refer to: C. Middleton, "Sexual Inequality and Stratification Theory", in F. Parkin (ed.), The Social Analysis of Class Structure, (London, 1974), pp. 179-203; J. Gardiner, "Women's Domestic Labour", in New Left Review, 89 (1975), pp. 47-58; M. Coulson et al. "The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism - a Critique", New Left Review, 89 (1975), pp. 59-71; J. Gardiner, "Political Economy of Domestic Labour in Capitalist Society", in Barker and Allen, Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage, (London, 1976), pp. 109-20; S. Allen and D. Leonard Barker, "Introduction: the Interdependence of Work and Marriage" in Allen and Barker (eds.) loc. cit., pp. 1-20; L. Davidoff, "The Rationalization of Housework", in Allen and Barker (eds), loc. cit., pp. 121-51; W. Secombe, "The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism", in New Left Review, 83 (1974), pp. 3-24; W. Secombe, "Domestic Labour - Reply to Critics", New Left Review, 89 (1975), pp. 85-96; V. Beechey, "Some Notes on Female Wage Labour in Capitalist Production", in Capital and Class, 3 (1977), pp. 45-66; J. Gardiner et al. "Women's Domestic Labour", in Bulletin of Conference of Socialist Economists, 4 (1975), pp. 1-11; and L. Davidoff et al. "Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society", in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley, The Rights and Wrongs of Women (Middlesex, 1977), pp. 139-75.

Women in the village contribute to the market as much as men do or perhaps more than they do; they send dairy products, eggs, chicken, handicrafts (carpets and other textiles) but since the women themselves have no direct relation with the market and their menfolk are their representatives who market their products and take control of the income received for the products of their labour, women seem to have very little bearing on the market or even play no part in it at all.

On the whole, throughout Iran, including Doniq, women who are busy at home in domestic routines; bearing and rearing children, processing dairy products and producing handicrafts for sale in the market, tending animals and carrying out half or even the total burden of agricultural work, are regarded as 'non-working' and economically 'inactive' and 'unimportant' people. The discrimination is also evident in the national statistics of the country. A man who is not in the direct employment of someone and who, for instance, raises grain for his own family, is listed in the National Census as economically 'active' and as a full-time worker. Whereas his wife, who works as hard as her husband and whose contribution is as crucial as his to the perpetuation of family and society is excluded from the official statistics and is categorized as economically 'inactive'.<sup>1</sup> For most sociologists, and Muslim apologists also, the world in which men are busy appears as the context of 'work', 'production' and 'infra-structure' of the economy, while the family and women's world are known as the field of 'non-work', 'consumption' and superstructure, emphasizing the idea that the women who spend their time at home performing domestic tasks are 'non-productive' and parasites who depend for their subsistence on the labour of their menfolk.

1. L. Beck and N. Keddie, "Introduction", in Beck and Keddie (eds.), op. cit., p.3; M. Sedghi and A. Ashraf, "The Role of Women in Iranian Development", in J.W. Jacqz (ed.) Iran: Past, Present and Future, Persepolis Symposium, (Aspen Institute, 1977), pp. 200-9; and B. Rogers, The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies, (London, 1980), pp. 59-75.





Milking.

This expression and belief might be relevant to the women of prosperous and wealthy families who have servants at home to perform all their domestic jobs, while they themselves spend their time at leisure and in self-beautification, but that cannot be said of the majority of women who often work "round the clock" and with scarcely any labour-saving facilities to maintain themselves and their families. The jobs carried out at home are certainly 'work' requiring energy and time, especially in the rural areas of the third world where women perform their traditional jobs under the most primitive and labour-intensive conditions. Analysis of the 'housework' of women in Doniq indicates that not only are these tasks 'work' but they are also of utmost social and economic importance to the family and have a real bearing on outside economy, though they are performed behind the scenes.

Women in Doniq have a long working day which begins before dawn and usually ends after midnight. On the whole, a woman spends twenty hours of her day and night on the performance of daily activities, if we calculate her working day as beginning at six o'clock in the morning and continuing till one o'clock the following morning - quite a common programme of work for women. Generally the routines are time-consuming and wearisome because of the primitive mode of life and absence of labour-saving devices. Unlike housewives in highly industrialized societies, women of Doniq do not use ready-prepared food or cook with modern mechanized gadgets; they cook daily on a mud-made oven whose fuel is also prepared by the women themselves. The staple foods of the village are bread and dairy products, on the daily preparation of which women spend considerable time. Animals are milked twice a day, in the early morning and late evenings, and the milk is then boiled and made into yoghurt and butter. Cooking starts early in the morning on a mud-brick oven sunk in the ground. Every morning, before the oven is lit it must be cleaned out and the previous day's ash carried in a tub on the shoulders to a spot a few



Churning.

yards away from the house, a place called the küllih where ashes are collected to be used for fertilizing of land. It requires a number of trips for all the ash to be taken to the küllih. On the last round the women fetch fuel from the karmalih - the 'private fuelstore' - a hundred meters away from the house, to heat the oven. There are few families who have been able to afford to allocate a separate room for the oven and cooking. In most households the oven has been built in the same room where family members sit, eat and sleep, in which case setting up the oven is even more difficult for the women. Before heating the oven, they have to take out of the room all the floor and bed-coverings and all other fabrics in order to prevent them from getting smoky and dusty. Then the oven is lit, the women crouching beside it to add new pieces of fuel at frequent intervals to bring it to the high temperature needed for bread baking, as well as stirring a big pot of milk on it to cook till it is ready for churning. The boiled milk is poured into a big heavy earthenware container - 'nehra'-and churned by hand for two hours during which it is checked occasionally with a small stick through a hole on the side of the nehra to see if it is forming into butter. This butter is the most valuable of the dairy products and is not usually concerned at daily meals, but is sold or exchanged by the men of the household in the market for other consumer goods.

Among the routines, bread baking is the most wearisome task for women, especially when it is carried out in hot weather. In the hot summer, sitting over an oven baking bread is altogether an almost unbearable chore for women. In small households the bread might be prepared every two or three days, but in large families where the consumption is greater, the bread is baked every day. The dough is usually prepared the night before and partially leavened with a small piece of dough left over from the previous day's dough. It is shaped into at least forty small cakes, and next morning these are reshaped one by one into flat pancake-like loaves and stuck to





Women and girls queuing at the spring for water  
during summer time.



Bread baking.

the wall of the oven. The job involves repeatedly reaching deep into the hot oven up to the waist to stick on or pull off the cooked bread.

The women's work is also multiplied by having to fetch water from the spring a few yards away from the households. The drinkable water of the villagers is supplied by two small springs, from which fetching water is considered just 'women's work'. A woman might call at the spring four or five times a day to fetch the water needed for her family. She has to spend more time fetching water in the summer time when the water at the spring is low and there is always a long queue of women waiting to draw water. In the summer, women often prefer to drink or fetch water from the muddy well, full of rubbish and frogs, which are to be found in their own establishments or on their neighbours' and relatives' property, rather than waiting for long hours in the queue. In addition, a woman has to add to her daily baking of bread, her butter churning and her fetching of water the regular daily washing up, sweeping and cleaning. Every day the dirty dishes and clothes are carried to be washed at the river which is outside the village. In the winter when the river is frozen, women often break the ice and do their washing up in the water flowing under the ice. Yet they encounter more problems in the hot weather when the water of the river dries up and water is generally scarce in the village. Women search for any kind of water, whether flowing or stagnant, in the surrounding gardens of the village or neighbouring villages to wash at least the nappies of the children. Added to all these tasks are the day-to-day sweeping, dusting and cleaning of homes and courtyards which are always exposed to the mess of animal droppings, fodder and rubbish. The floor coverings of the room is taken out and after the cooking is finished the room is swept with a broom, usually made by the women themselves out of wild grass, which is often untied and tied again several times in the middle of sweeping until the sweeping is completed. The coverings and

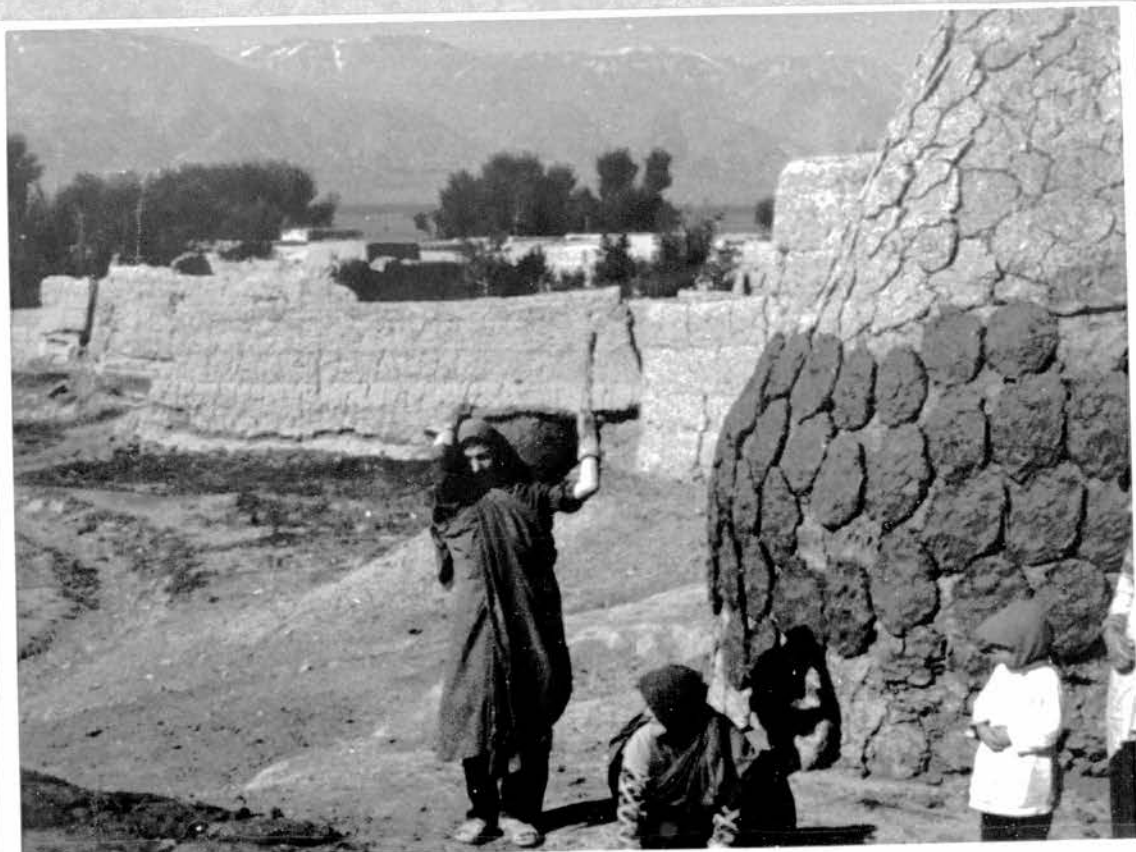


Washing dishes in a stagnant pool.

other items are also shaken outdoors and are taken back inside. Women then clean out the household latrines and carry the night soil in a tub to the field. Except for one household which owns a flush toilet connected to a cesspool, all the households have latrines which are built on elevated ground in a corner of the compound with a hole in the floor leading to a pit which should be regularly cleaned out. Further, since there is no electricity in the village, everyday the women have to clean the glasses of the lanterns and paraffin lamps and fill them up with paraffin to be used in the stable and the room.

In addition, every week the women heat water and bathe themselves and the children in the stable. There is no bath in the village. Although the men may go to the public bath in the town, there are fewer opportunities for women and children to do this owing to the pardah system and their extreme preoccupation with domestic work. While boy children are bathed only once in every three or four weeks or sometimes only on important occasions of the year, such as, bāyrām - 'New Year'-or before religious festivals, it is necessary for girl children to be bathed every week, otherwise their long hair will become full of lice (pediculosis is often observed in the hair of women and girl children, though it is washed every week). Mothers often complained that even if they wash the hair of their daughters every week and spend one or two hours searching through the hair and killing any possible lice, they never get rid of them entirely - the day for bathing the children is the most tiresome and nerve-racking day for women, for they have to heat pot after pot of water and carry it to the stable where the washing takes place on a flat stone-flagged area among the animals and their droppings which often get wet and are splashed on the bathers. Although women do not have to sew clothes, for the villagers' clothes are usually bought ready-made or second-hand, they do have to mend and patch up the old clothes by hand and often take apart the very worn-out things and sew linings or coverings for bedding. They some-





Making fuel outside a home.



Fetching fuel

times also knit sweaters and socks for the family members.

In addition to the daily routines, there are some specific jobs which are added to the women's toil according to the season or to the demands of special occasions. In the spring and summer, women are particularly busy preparing fuel which is used for the daily cooking and for heat in the household in the winter time. The dung dropped by the animals every day is carried to the karmalih and women spend sometime each day soaking it in water and shaping it into round cakes which are laid out on the ground or stuck to the walls of the household to dry it. After the fuel has dried, the women assisted by little boys or sometimes even by the men of the household, store the fuel in the qālāx - 'fuel store' - to be used in the autumn and winter time. Women are particularly over-burdened in the summer and autumn time which are planting and harvesting seasons when men are fully occupied in the fields. Although women do not go to work on the land, at harvesting time a great deal of work falls to the women in the way of sifting, grinding and packing the grain in the house. Of course, some men who have no male relatives to help them on the land, might secretly take their women to the field at night to help them with the threshing of the wheat and so on. When men are busy in the field, women prepare meals and take them personally to the men to eat on the land or send food with little boys. A woman may possibly have to prepare and serve meals to the family members for several times. Because of the varying types of work they do, and because they work in different places, it is not possible for all the family members to take their meal at a fixed time. For instance, once a man finishes ploughing or watering the land he comes back home asking for food. Shortly after him, other men may return from tending animals or working in the town and the women of the household have to prepare and serve meals for them as well. Then the children arrive home from school and so the provision of meals for the members of the family goes on for several hours. While



White washing the wall of a room.



Stacking fuel. On the left can be seen  
a finished fuel storage "rick".

men are busy in the field or working as wage labourers in the town, the tending of herds is entrusted to women. They clean the animal shelters, frequently watering and foddering them.

In addition to the daily regular washing, cleaning, sweeping and so forth, women in Doniq do a thorough household cleaning and mending twice a year. A few weeks before the New Year - bāyram - when the weather is sunny and the village well is working to irrigate the land, women take all the woollen items and heavy floor coverings, bed coverings; mattresses, blankets, curtains and so on and so forth, to wash them. All the heavy wool padded bedding; pillows, mattresses, bolsters and quilts which are made by the women themselves are emptied, cleaned and refilled. The blackened and smoky walls of the household are cleaned and white-washed by women who use white chalk-dust for the purpose, fetched by themselves from a mountain in a nearby village. If necessary they also make some changes in decoration and do structural repairs. This is one major annual washing and cleaning; another takes place in the last months of summer. On a normal day, although women do not cook anything else except dairy products and bread, on special festivals and religious holidays - Moharram and Ramazān, special foods, usually rice with curry, or broth and some sweets are provided for the family at home as well as being distributed to people outside the home. Of course all such items as vegetables, cereal products, sugar and rice are not purchased already packaged or tinned, but are bought by the kilo, loose, which often means long hours of minute inspection by the women, as they pick out tiny pebbles and bits of mud which are inevitably mixed up with the food.

Consequently, the enormous amount of work, along with lack of labour-saving devices, results in very busy and tedious days, weeks and years for women in the village. Their work at home is, in fact, unscheduled with no limits placed on working time and rest. Even if the jobs carried out by their menfolk outside the home do not benefit from any organized administration, there is nevertheless a separation between the physical work-



the home do not benefit from any organized administration, there is nevertheless a separation between the physical location of work and 'leisure', and therefore their tasks take a relative organized form. The shepherds herd animals outside home from dawn until evening and in the evening return home to rest; or the men who do paid jobs in the nearby town benefit from an even better-organized routine. They sell their labour power for a definite period of time and the rest of their time is their own. By contrast, for housewives in Doniq, there is no rigid division of their lives into work and leisure in respect of either physical location or time. Even though women are just as busy during the whole day as the men are outside the home, throughout the evening also and during some hours of the night, they continue working, looking after and providing food and comfort for people who return from outside work to take rest at home, or taking care of young and sick children. "Women's work is never done", says the old adage. Housewives in Doniq often complained that the lack of labour-saving devices and public utilities added up to a considerable expenditure of time and energy. A female informant who had stayed with a relative for a while in the city and was familiar with city life said,

"Our life is not a life at all. We are always involved in smoke and dust. The work the city women do is completely different from ours. They do cooking on gas cookers and wash dirty dishes and clothes inside the house with running water. When I stayed for a few weeks with my relative I always insisted on doing the washing up by myself, because running and warm water was so pleasant to me. Everywhere you looked you found pipes and taps in the toilet, courtyard and inside the house. We women don't have even a well inside the house to save us from having to wander about the village or even outside it to find some water... If we only had running water in the village, our work would be cut by half."

Women complained that even if they work long hours each day and wash and clean regularly, the smoke of the oven situated

in the same room as the family cooks, eats, sits and sleeps added to the lack of water and baths and the dirty lanes of the village make it appear as if they never work. The narrow and irregular lanes of the village which become muddy to a depth of about half a meter in rainy seasons so that communication becomes impossible, are also used as channels through which dirty water flows from the households. These lanes are always piled high with cattle droppings, rubbish, mud and dust yet these are the play grounds of the village children. Therefore, even if mothers spend considerable time in cleaning, bathing and changing their clothes, the children always look dusty and dirty. The same condition is true of the homes. It is not uncommon for a woman to sweep and dust a room three or four times a day, and yet all the shelves and floor-coverings are never free of smoke, dust and dirt, because the room does not have a proper door and windows, and the slightest breeze brings all the dust and dirt of the lanes into the house. This situation makes women more resentful. Most women said bitterly,

"People from the city think that the children and women of the villages have dirty and smelly habits. They think that we never clean our homes or wash ourselves and our children. When some relatives come over to visit or we go to the town to visit them, they keep away from us. When we want to kiss them to say good-bye, they refuse; or the dishes and bedding we use in their houses, are kept and washed separately. They think we are leprous or that God has created us like this. They don't know we always 'dig the ground with our noses' and have no rest day and night because of the enormous load of overwork; and yet the dirty state of the village and dirty nature of the work itself - making fuel from animal droppings, make us look dirty. If they lived in the village for a month and did the same jobs as we do, we are sure they would not be presentable at all..."

There have been some recent changes in Doniq in the way of doing housework which have been of great benefit to the wom-



Washing clothes at the river using clubs.



Women returning from the river  
with their washing.

en. Most households now own a paraffin stove, recently introduced to the village. On the days the women do not have to bake bread and in the hot weather when the oven is not necessary to heat the house, women take the opportunity to get rid of smoke and dust. They do their cooking on the paraffin stove which is a better and cleaner way of cooking than the traditional cooker, though it takes longer. One woman said,

"This paraffin stove has really saved our lives. Before it came to the village, on the days we didn't heat the oven, we used to set up ojāx - (a traditional stove made with two stones placed side-by-side and fuelled with animal dung) in a corner of the courtyard to make tea over and over again for the men or cook the milk for churning. We couldn't keep it running the whole day, so we had to light it several times a day to make tea for our men who are used to drinking tea from morning till night. Frequently the fire went out and we had to pile on more fuel and puff at it to get it alight."

Another women said,

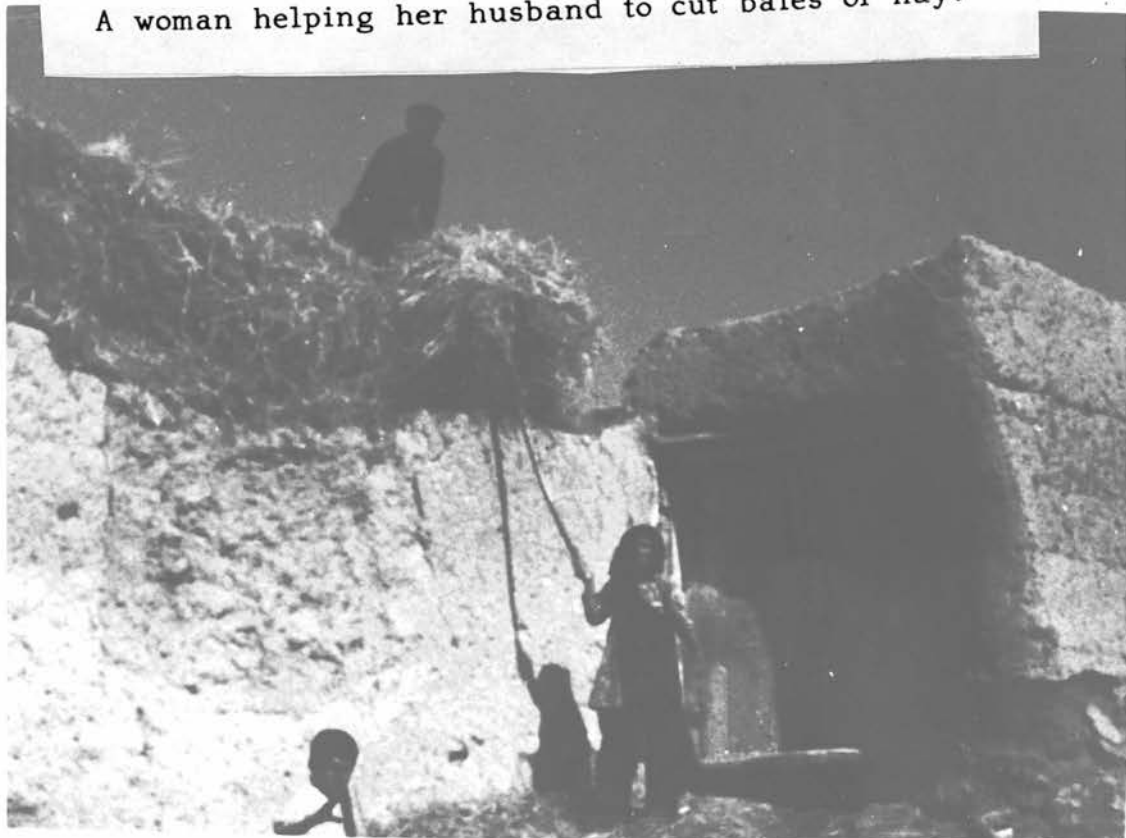
"All my children have been used to being bottle-fed. I always feed them with cow's milk. Before the paraffin stove came to the village, there was no device to warm up the milk and get it ready by their feeding time. I used to sit up for several hours during the night heating the milk on the paraffin lamp. Sometimes I was so tired and sleepy because of working the whole day that I dropped the bowl on the ground and spilled the milk, and the baby went hungry and screamed until morning."

Nowadays washing powder has also become available in the village shop or if it cannot be bought in the village, people supply it from the town. This means that women do not have to wash the dirty dishes with mud pulled off the walls of their houses or use a wooden club to beat the dirty clothes to get them clean, though using mud or clubs are still more or less the accepted practice in the village. In addition, recently in some houses ordinary wells from which the water is drawn up





A woman helping her husband to cut bales of hay.



A pregnant woman helping to store fodder on the roof  
of a stable.

by rope and pail have been drilled and these are of utmost benefit and help to housewives.

How women organize 'housework':

There are two sorts of families in Doniq: (1) the family where there is only one woman with young children; (2) the family with three or four women. Generally speaking, since women's work seems to be a matter of worthless domestic duties, a man cannot contribute to this kind of work. A man who might help his wife at home is teased and called ārvād jes - wommanish mannered. By the same token, it is believed that the assistance of men in the house makes the women forward and diminishes the men's respect and power at home. Therefore, men generally avoid helping their women at home even if the latter are alone and have no assistance. In the first type of family where there are no grown-up daughters or other female relatives to give a hand to the woman of the household, the latter tries to deal with many tasks at the same time. She might set up the oven and while it is heating in preparation for the cooking, she rushes with the child in her arms to fetch water for cooking and other needs. Even if the male members of the household are at leisure (especially in the winter time when they are free from agricultural work) they prefer to sun themselves and chat with the village men in front of the mosque rather than helping their women at home. When I asked a male informant if he ever helped his wife in the house, he answered,

"No, a few days ago when the children were away and my wife was alone, she asked me to pour water to wash the baby. I said to her, 'Your pour it yourself and wash the baby too'."

He continued,

"You know, my sister, everything has a limit. To-day she asks me to help with the washing, to-



Cock fighting

"morrow with the child minding and the next day the cooking. So what's become of the difference between men and women."

Another man answered the same question in this way:

"Not only do I not help my wife, but I would break the house apart and throw things around if my tea is served a little bit late. What's a woman for?"

In spite of all these claims, some men have been heard doing churning. This is, as women themselves made clear, to exert more power in the household through intervention in women's work. As indicated before, dairy goods after carpets are the most valuable products of households of the village. They are exchanged or bartered in the shops of the village or in the town market for consumer goods such as sugar, tea, oil and other items. Women, however, sometimes take the opportunity to pilfer scraps of the butter they make and barter it with pedlars in exchange for edible treats for their children or for household goods. Knowing this, the men sometimes prefer to do the churning themselves in order to measure and check the exact amount of butter which is gained.

Generally though, since the home is considered the women's space, men are not expected to linger in the house. A man who spends too much time with his family or where women are working, is ridiculed. Women and children are not considered fit company for a man, and therefore, when time is heavy on his hands, he busies himself in chatting with men in the village shop or taking part in dog or cock fights and rabbit hunting. In the evening if the village shop stays open, the men gather there again after their dinner; otherwise they either go to visit male relatives or friends or receive visitors in their houses.<sup>1</sup> As a result, a woman cannot expect any sort of help

1. In reference to Anatolian villagers who are culturally akin to the people (cont'd)



from her husband, even if she has no female assistance. When a woman falls ill or gives birth, her husband refuses to prepare tea or cook even for himself. Either female relatives or neighbours come over to provide meals for him and do housework or he forces his wife to get up and perform domestic routines and provide for his comforts. One woman told me that her neighbour Amanah was still in labour - she had given birth, but the placenta had not been removed yet - when her husband knocked on the door and asked his wife to go and milk the animals and give him some food. My informant said that she had been able to force the husband to go away, but he said that he did not understand: His wife ought to finish soon and go to milk the animals and prepare his tea and food.

Sometimes it is possible for a woman who is on her own to ask for help from women outside the home. If she is a woman who has married locally, there is a chance of borrowed help for her from her own mother or unmarried sisters; otherwise she sometimes calls on the help of a close friend or a neighbour. A woman is always in a position to ask for help from other women even in the performance of her daily activities. Women are generally familiar with each other's work conditions and are not stingy with assistance to each other if they have anything to give. A close neighbour who has several little girls, sends one to mind her neighbour's child or fetch her water. Among the many routines, bread baking is a job which can never be done by one woman. Two or three women must help each other. One shapes the dough into cakes, and another

... of Doniq in many respects, P. Stirling notes a similar situation - men keep away from the house apart from sleeping and eating, and it is felt to be beneath a man's dignity to stay at home with his wife and children. "Women do not look to their husbands for companionship; still less do men look to their wives". A similar attitude was noted in the Ksour community of Morocco by Vanessa Maher who points out that, "It is this prohibition on the associated and spatial relationships of men with the hearth and women which prevents them from sharing women's tasks except in exceptional circumstances..." See P. Stirling, Turkish Village, (London, 1965), pp. 101-113; and Maher, op. cit., p. 112.

sticks them to the oven or pulls off the cooked bread. This means that women who have no assistance in the household must plan a bread-baking time to suit their neighbours and then only one oven need be heated instead of two or three and bread for several households can be baked at one session in this one oven. In this situation, bread baking becomes a sort of social club meeting for the women who exchange all the news and gossip of the village, though it is a hard and wearisome routine. While they wait for their bread to bake, their tongues are as busy as their hands.

In any case, one woman is unable to complete her daily chores properly, even though she might receive help from outside home, and so she suffers under the double pressure of hard work and the reproach of her husband. This is not the case with women who are three or four in a household, particularly when their relationships are a mother with mature daughters or a mother-in-law with one daughter-in-law and unmarried daughters, (but not sisters-in-law (HBW) who always compete over the performance of housework). Although their burden is never eased because of the greater bulk of the work, at least they are able to deal with various labour-intensive jobs properly by sharing them among themselves. Girls are taught very early in life to be useful around the home. In a household where there is a mother with her grown-up unmarried daughters, the latter share most of the tasks among themselves. While one fetches water and fuel, another minds children and another works under the supervision of mother at cooking, sweeping and cleaning. In families where there is a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law and unmarried girls, the tasks are divided among them hierarchically in accordance with their ages and status. The harder and more unpleasant jobs, those which need to be done outside the house, such as making fuel, fetching water and washing dirty clothes and dishes at the river, are handed over to the daughter-in-law, while unmarried daughters are entrusted with the tasks which are performed in-

side the household); sweeping, cleaning and tending animals and children. The mother-in-law carries out only the cooking herself, though she remains in overall charge of the other activities.

Sometimes the unmarried daughters are given the same difficult and disagreeable routines as those performed by the daughter-in-law. This is because mothers want to bring up their daughters to be able to deal with any work - however tedious - which will become their responsibility later, when they are married. But the relationship between a mother, (the manager and organizer of housework), and her own daughters living in her household is different from that between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. There is probably more sympathy between a mother and her daughter than she will feel towards a stranger. If a daughter shirks her work, her mother might ignore it, or might remind her of her duties, since she feels responsible for the girl's future. But she never refers to such matters in front of the girl's father or brothers, who might punish her. In the presence of male relatives of the household and other related and non-related people, a mother often attempts to praise her daughter's character, behaviour and her ability in dealing with work; often representing her as conscientious, responsible and hardworking. On the other hand, the opposite situation is often claimed by a mother-in-law about her daughter-in-law. The mother-in-law seeks every opportunity to find a mistake or a little slackness in her daughter-in-law and to report it to the menfolk and have her reprimanded. Frequently, unmarried daughters connive to spy on the daughter-in-law reporting how their sister-in-law (HBW) works.

As the daughter of a woman grows up or her son brings home a bride, she gradually rids herself of manual work and takes a managerial role in the household. She decides on the daily meal - how much and what to cook, checks up on the provisions for the home and clothes for the children and daughters-

in-law, reporting their requirements to the menfolk to purchase, if necessary, and she controls and directs the work done by the younger women. Even if the cooking of other meals is entrusted to daughters-in-law, the treatment of milk products is never entrusted to them. The task of processing milk is performed by the senior woman of the household - the mother-in-law, so that this woman exerts the same control and power over the younger women of the household as a man often does in relation to his wife (see p. 235). That is, the daughters-in-law might pilfer scraps of butter or cheese and jointly barter them with the itinerant pedlars, or touch the nehra - 'the churning container' - with unwashed and dirty hands, in which case, 'the spell is broken' - barakat qāčār - and it does not yield as much butter as expected. In addition, butter is carried to the bazaar by the men of the family and so it must be prepared well, and must be very clean. If the men are blamed at the market for selling inferior produce they will pass on the blame to the mother-in-law who is in charge of the household.

In any case, women, either alone or as group in a household make an effort to ensure that the family functions properly throughout the year. In addition to regular daily cooking, washing, mending and other duties carried out throughout the various seasons of the year, they try to feed, clothe and comfort the family members properly and according to individual needs. Thus, the comment that women's work at home is not 'work' and that women are parasites who live on the labour of their menfolk is inaccurate. Although their work at home is done in a separate world and maybe appears unrelated to the men's world which is considered 'economic' and 'productive', it is of vital economic and social importance to the family and cannot be regarded as marginal to the economic and social system. Women's daily work at home enables men to concentrate on their work in the field or in the town certain that their meals will be ready for them when they come home hungry and



that they will return to relax in a cleaned, warm and comfortable house. If something prevents a woman from giving all her usual services to her family one day, the entire machinery of the daily round comes to a stop. The activities of the men outside the home are disordered and children suffer in squalor and go for hours without being fed or changed. Moreover, even if the day-to-day feeding, clothing and refreshing of the labour force which allows men to continue their work bears only a subtle and indirect relationship to the world outside the home, women in Doniq do not produce only services and goods for home consumption, but supply goods, such as dairy products and handicrafts which are exchanged in the market and which make an obvious, direct and crucial contribution to the economy of the family.

Nevertheless, all women's domestic routines whether of obvious or subtle economic importance, and however difficult or wearisome, are devalued by the men of the village and are not considered 'work' at all. When I asked a male informant whether a man in the village works harder than his wife, he answered,

"What does a woman do? The man works outside the home for six months in the field in hot weather and sun, ploughing, watering and harvesting. What does a woman do? She sits at home just 'lying about'."

When I retorted that she didn't; she cooked, washed, took care of children, animals and so on and so forth, he said,

"That's not work; look at other villages; when the harvesting time comes, all the women come outside and take sickles and work in the field shoulder to shoulder with their men."

Since 'home' is for men themselves a place where they come back from 'work' to rest, they believe that anyone who stays at home, does not work, but relaxes. Another male informant

said,

"The jobs women do are just worthless and useless.  
The job which doesn't bring money to the family  
cannot be called real work."

Women often voiced their resentment over the fact they work harder and longer hours than their menfolk and do not take any holiday at all, whereas the men have holidays for at least two or three months during winter when their agricultural work eases off. Yet when the women say as much as a word about the difficulty and the bulk of their domestic routines, their men tell them that they only eat and sleep free of charge.

In short, even if women work as hard as men and their jobs and contributions are as crucial as men's to the perpetuation of the family, the balance of their relationships and interdependence is not evenly weighted. Through the women's work at home, the men are able to work in the field where they produce grain for their own families' consumption as well as crop surpluses for exchanging in the market. They also take to market the dairy products produced by women themselves, but the women do not receive a fair benefit from the income which arises from this combined labour. The men take full control over the income, regarding women as 'non-working' and as parasites who receive their subsistence freely.

## CHAPTER 5

### FECUNDITY

In Doniq - as in many parts of Eurasia - motherhood is glorified and barrenness is regarded as sinful. As long as a woman fails to give proof of her fertility, she suffers from a social stigma, and maltreatment of a barren woman is a common practice. Until a woman has produced children, especially male ones, for her husband's group, she has no justification for settling happily into her new home; she is at the bottom of the domestic hierarchy and is regarded as a threat to the unity and solidarity of the agnatic group. But as soon as a woman has become a mother, her social and family status improves: she secures a place in the group, bound to it through a blood tie. Her role in the family becomes assured and her relationships with her husband and in-laws become settled. With the arrival of children, a woman's early deprivation and submissiveness, which as a young daughter-in-law she has to tolerate in the extended household, is gradually altered for the better; and her importance in the household increases with the number, age and sex of the children she has borne.<sup>1</sup>

1. See B. Pakizegi, "Legal and social position of Iranian women", in Beck and Keddie (eds.), op. cit., pp. 216-44; Rice, op. cit., p. 137; N. Tapper, op. cit., pp. 36-8; Silverman, op. cit., p. 133; M.Z. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview", in Rosaldo and Lampere (eds.), op. cit., p. 36; Denich, op. cit., pp. 251-52; J.F. Collier, "Women in Politics", in Rosaldo and Lampere (eds.), op. cit., pp. 89-96; see especially p. 93; Wolf, "Chinese Women...", op. cit., p. 158; Paul, op. cit., p. 295; Beck and Keddie, "Introduction", in Beck and Keddie (eds.), op. cit., pp. 4-5; Eglar, op. cit., p. 101; "Status of women in India, a synopsis...", op. cit., p. 19; Friedl, "Vasilik: a village...", op. cit., p. 68; Fuller, op. cit., p. 35; Campbell, op. cit., pp. 182-83; Appadorai (ed.), op. cit., pp. 62-3; Boserup, op. cit., p. 49; J. Behnam, op. cit., pp. 75-8; V. Chakraborty, Condition of Bengali Women, Around the 2nd Half of the 19th Century, (Calcutta, 1963), see especially chapter 1; and M. Wolf, Women and The Family in Rural Taiwan, (California, 1972).

In Doniq, unlike the household tasks which are regarded as unimportant, the bearing of children is considered vital, because children will continue the ancestral line and provide the family with more labourers. One of the most important expectations of the villagers from a marriage is the benefit they will derive from its offspring as early as possible. The new bride who is cut off from her natal family, because she can not be a productive element in her own father's household, and is transferred to a strange man's household to perpetuate his name and lineage, is expected to give proof of her fertility as soon as possible after her wedding. Doniq marriage rituals are dominated by fertility symbols that make the bride's function in her new family abundantly clear and also demonstrate the belief that they will prevent her from becoming barren. Before a bride leaves her father's house, the older men among her close relatives hold her arms, turning her around the household oven, reminding her of her duties towards her in-laws as well as giving her the xeir-duā - 'the wish and prayer for her fertility'. The same prayer for her fertility is recited when she is received by the older male relatives of the bridegroom in the latter's house (see Chapter 3, pp. 187-88).

In another little ceremony which takes place shortly before a bride's departure from her parent's house, she is presented with a hen by her father. This act expresses the wish that she may become in childbearing as fecund as a hen that lays plenty of eggs. Later, when the bride is within a few steps of her in-laws' house the bridegroom is notified so that he can receive and welcome her. To welcome his bride, the bridegroom bites a big red apple and throws it towards her, believing that this will make her fruitful. The village men compete noisily to snatch up the apple, believing that it holds magical properties for women, especially barren ones who become fertile if they eat part of it. Sometimes, people reported, bridegrooms are not careful enough when they throw the apple towards the bride so that the apple strikes her very hard. Last year, an



informant reported,

"the apple hit a bride's head so hard that she became unconscious for a couple of days."

Finally, after the wedding, when a new bride is taken out of her gardah - 'the wedding room' - (see Chapter 3, p.189), the shawl which covers her face when she is conducted to her husband's house is rolled up and put on her head, waiting for a little boy to enter the room and snatch the shawl. This little boy, usually from the bridegroom's side of the family, enters the room and asks the bride three times if he may take it or not. The third time he asks, an older female relative allows it to be snatched, whereupon it is delivered to the girl's mother-in-law. This ritual is called duvāx qāpdi - "veil snatching" party - indicating that the new bride will give proof of her fertility very soon and specifically that she will bear a son for her first child.

After the wedding, the first day a bride settles in her in-laws' household, she is expected to render feasible her in-laws' wishes and nourish their dreams. If she is slightly late in proving her fertility - that is, if she does not become pregnant within a reasonable period of time or within the period expected, her mother-in-law will look for every possible excuse to remind her of her purpose as a wife and to remark on the delay. In this goal, the young woman herself is united with the family, although for different reasons. For until she shows the first signs of pregnancy, she is not regarded as a true member of her husband's descent group. In theory marriage gives her automatic membership in her husband's domestic group, but in fact she lives on the fringe of the group and her relationship to the man's blood relations is quite ambiguous. Most of her affairs are carried out and her needs met by her own natal family, though she does not live with them any longer. For instance, when she falls ill, she is sent to her

father's house to be taken to the doctor by her own male relatives. A husband is unwilling to spend money on his wife until she perpetuates his name and title. A young woman who had been married for nine months and had not yet provided her husband with any offspring not to mention sons, was found to have a tumour in her womb. Although her husband enjoyed relative economic prosperity, he refused to contribute to the expenses of her treatment. Her father paid for her entire treatment, taking her to many doctors and hospitals. Even after she had had an operation and was convalescing, her husband and his family refused to take her back and look after her in their own household, because, as the girl's mother put it very directly, "she wasn't well enough yet to work for them". She stayed in her father's house for six months after the operation, all her needs being met by them. Occasionally her husband visited her and brought some fruit and other little gifts to her.

In addition to the fact that, before she has produced heirs for her husband a woman is not considered a member of his group, her day-to-day position in her in-laws' household is by no means stable. She is in the shaky position of being threatened with repudiation at every turn, because barrenness in a woman is an acceptable ground in the village for divorce. She is often criticized and maltreated by her husband and in-laws for very unimportant faults. A mother whose daughter had been married for two years and seemed to be a little slow in getting pregnant, was very happy when she was informed of her daughter's pregnancy, remarking,

"It has been two years since my daughter was taken to her husband's house. She has been pestered a great deal and teased by her in-laws just because she didn't get pregnant soon after her marriage. Her in-laws wanted to send her back with the excuse that she talks through her nose and her husband doesn't love her. Her husband beats her up when his sisters, brothers and all the other members of the family tell him to. I'll be glad when she has a baby because they won't

"divorce her or be so rough on her."

In the chapter on marriage I have already referred to the utter passivity and extreme obedience of a new bride in her in-laws' household in the first years of marriage - attitudes she adopts in order to establish herself in marriage. Indeed, the subordination and submissiveness of a new bride to her husband's family members is most marked in the period before the first sign of pregnancy appears. She should be prepared to take orders from and carry out the requests of any member of the family; and she should be particularly attentive to her mother-in-law's requests, because the stability of her position in her husband's house before she has children is very much in the hands of her mother-in-law. A mother-in-law has the superiority of age, she has borne many children and has married sons and daughters and has managed to transcend the inferiority of her sex and establish a strong position for herself in her husband's house. She has also gained some influence in family affairs and in her general relationship to the male members of the household. It should also be remembered that her influence in the family is emphasized by the fact that she has already built-up loyalty in her son before his marriage. Therefore, a young bride's security, and her husband's and her other in-laws' good and bad behaviour towards her is totally dependent on her mother-in-law. If the latter does not like any of her daughter-in-law's attitudes, she has the power to make her son punish his wife or she can ruin his relationship with her so that he may threaten her with repudiation. On the other hand the mother-in-law also has the power to stabilize and improve her daughter-in-law's relationship with her husband even if it means overlooking her mistakes or reporting them to her husband euphemistically.

Normally, a man does not treat his wife well in the first years of marriage because he has no sentimental attachment to her. They are virtual strangers who have had a lack of contact

quite apart from any friendship before marriage. Besides, because their marriage is an arranged one which is usually undertaken in an experimental and apprehensive mode, the atmosphere in which a young couple first live together is cautious or even suspicious. The husband tests his wife in many ways. Her relations with people outside the home and with his family in the home are checked repeatedly. He sees her as a threat to his allegiance and to unity within his family - "like a worm within the apple of the patrilocal domestic group" which seems to have entered it to destroy the group's unity and loyalty to one another, a matter of great importance to the family members which enhances their reputation. In any case, a mother-in-law can take advantage of her influence and of her son's loyalty to her, either to weaken yet further her daughter-in-law's precarious position or to support the young woman until she has bound herself to the group by a blood tie. This is one of the reasons why a young bride is taught and continuously reminded by her natal family to be even more respectful, subservient and attentive to her mother-in-law than to her other in-laws. She should read her mother-in-law's orders from her face before she utters them. In addition, the girl should speak sweetly and in flattering terms towards her mother-in-law in order to encourage her to put up with the bride until she has produced children. In short, until a new bride has given proof of her fertility, she has no vital bond with her husband and his lineage. As she is not considered a true member of her husband's natal family, she is often ill-treated and threatened with divorce, she is considered subordinate and subservient and is seen as a threat to loyalty and unity within her husband's domestic group.

If the situation appears black for a young woman who is newly married and whose fertility has not yet been definitely proved to her in-laws, the outlook and conditions of a barren woman who has been married for a few years and whose lack of fertility has been to some extent proved to her husband's relat-



ives, is considerably more difficult. There is only one barren woman - aramih - in the village, but two more women who have been married for many years and who have each given birth to only one child and are no longer fertile, are regarded by the villagers as barren. While a new bride's harsh and unpleasant treatment is somewhat eased after she gives birth, a barren woman never knows any such advantages. She continues to be ill-treated and to experience a life of permanent subordination. She is always threatened with repudiation or with a rival to share her husband. Barrenness is considered a woman's fault and since she is thought to be to blame, she is punished for it. She is never trusted. It is believed that a woman who has no children feels no responsibility towards her husband's household and property. Since she has no children, she is suspected of feeling no obligation to take good care of her husband's property in order to build a worthwhile inheritance for her children in the future. It is also thought that because a barren woman is not certain whether she will be maintained in her husband's house or not, she not only fails to take care of her husband's property and other assets, but is a traitor to it. She is believed to steal her husband's wealth, spending it lavishly on useless things or giving it to her own family. Despite this claim and belief, the evidence suggests that a barren woman has to work harder in her husband's house in order to compensate for the labour force which is lost to the family because of her infertility, as well as trying to add to her husband's prosperity in order to keep him from grumbling. A barren woman described her work situation in her husband's house as follows:

"My husband didn't have anything when we separated from his family. When we were moving to a separate house, my in-laws ridiculed us. They said, "Do you think that you will be able to own something in the future? Children always bring fortune to parents". I have been weaving carpets for fifteen hours a day for sixteen years. I always complete a whole carpet in forty days, whereas it

"it normally takes three months for one person to complete a carpet. I spin the wool myself, whereas other village women usually get it done for them. Because I have no children to help with the farming and husbandry chores, I have to work very hard to provide 1000 Tomān to hire a boy from another family."

In addition, barrenness is regarded as a social stigma. A barren woman is teased and taunted by people. The most spiteful teasing comes from her in-laws, especially the wives of her husband's brothers, among whom there is frequently envy and competition. Another woman who had given birth to only one child and was considered by people to be barren said that her husband's brothers and their wives were always sending messages to her husband saying that his bālāx - 'female cow' - was no blessing to him and that it would be better for him to exchange her for another wife. She continued,

"Fourteen years ago I gave birth to a son and he was the first and last one for me. I don't suffer so much from my infertility as I suffer from people's teasing especially from by HBW who lives near us. When she was pregnant with her fifth child, she used to come over and show off her abdomen and boast about her pregnancy to me. Actually she wasn't fertile for a long time after her second child and after years of treatment and spending a lot on doctors and medicine, she was able to have another baby. Last year when she gave birth a girl, a woman who used to take her to the doctor in town, came to me and asked me if I knew my sister-in-law - (HBW) was now the mother of a nice little girl. I got so annoyed that I sent a message to her saying, "so what, if it is a girl, it's useless, even if she is nice..." A few days ago my HBW told one of my neighbours that I had gone to listen to them on čaršanba gejasī - 'the last wednesday of the year'<sup>1</sup> - and because she knew that I was the one listening to them she had intentionally said that even if I killed myself with all my work I wouldn't receive any more 'gifts' from God any more. The fact is

1. It is a custom in the village that on the last wednesday of the year before New Year - bāyrām, people go up onto the roofs of each other's houses to gauge their true wishes by the first words they hear.

"that I never take advantage of the habit of listening to people on čarsanba gejası. My HBW accuses me of these things just to annoy me and make me suffer."

Another point about barren women is that they are accused of having the 'evil eye' - göz or bad nazar. When a woman with a male child in her arms comes across a woman who is barren, she draws her veil over the child and hides him lest the barren woman cast the 'evil eye' on him and kill him.

However, having children rescues women from all the above-mentioned forms of unpleasant behaviour in the family and from teasing and accusation by other people. The birth of a child, particularly a boy, brings a woman to full recognition as a member of the family and assures her normal social status. As Fuller notes of the women of a Lebanese village,

"through childbirth a woman proves herself as an essential part of the kin nexus into which she has married."

After having children most of a woman's affairs and needs which were dealt with by her natal family, are transferred to and become the responsibility of her husband and his family. She is also considered the honour of her husband. After the birth of her first child it is said that the new bride 'takes root in the new family' - kök atār - and is not so vulnerable as to be threatened with repudiation at the whim of any member of the family, even the junior ones. Her standing in her husband's household and among older women generally improves. Their attitude towards her, as Campbell notes about the new bride in Sarakatsani,

"shifts from tolerance to acceptance and [relative]

1. Fuller, op. cit., p. 52.



"affection towards her as the mother of their tiny kinsmen... Although so long as the extended family remain undivided and a younger brother of her husband does not also bring a wife into the group, the bride continues to work very hard and obey all family members. But she will now receive, necessarily, more assistance from the other women in the family and often the demands of her child for the breast, as well as the other attention it requires, will take priority over all other considerations. At this time the husband's behaviour towards his wife undergoes fundamental changes. He now begins to talk with her more freely before other members of the family. She is not any longer merely the conjugal partner with whom he has sexual relations, which even in marriage possess a suspect if not exactly shameful quality. She is the mother of his child; and in this role, especially if her infant is a son, the husband openly recognizes his wife without the ambivalence which previously attached to their relationship."<sup>1</sup>

All in all, the parents of a newly married woman are anxious for their daughter to prove her fertility as soon as possible in order that her relationships with her husband and his relatives can be stabilized. The parents, especially the mother, become very worried and embarrassed if their recently married daughter is late in becoming pregnant. The mother takes her daughter to the midwife without letting the girl's in-laws know, so that she can be examined and reassured about her fertility. She goes beyond this and has recourse to Türka dāvā - herbal medicines and magical cures - to hurry her along in getting pregnant. The mother of Tayyiba, who had been married for two years and seemed to be late in becoming pregnant, used to dissolve zay - 'vitriol' - in water and give it to a virgin girl to pour over her daughter's head through a spout, or seven girls used to sew around her skirt seven coloured threads. Besides, the mother used to treat her with a mixture of cow's dung, crude oil and eggs. It is usually believed that when a recently married woman is late in child bearing, she is aff-

1. Campbell, op. cit., pp. 69-70.



ected by Āilla - an 'evil spirit'-which is believed to originate in another woman who got married at the same time that she did and in the same street. Thus a religious leader (mullā) is paid to exorcise the Āilla by a special prayer. In short, children are very vital in a woman's life, affecting her status in family and society. Therefore, the slightest delay on the part of a woman in becoming pregnant or, worse still, barrenness causes considerable worry and problems for her own relatives who make every effort to assure themselves that she is in a fertile condition.

### Importance of sons

The references cited above all indicate that it is not just the barrenness or the fertility of a woman which define her position. The sex of her children also plays a vital role in the status of a woman. A mother who gives birth only to female children is regarded as virtually barren and often has no better status than a woman who is actually barren. A woman is thought to be at fault if she gives birth to girl babies and she is often ill-treated by her husband, who threatens her with repudiation and says he will take a second wife: For a female child cannot continue the line and family pedigree of her father. Anthropological materials about various communities in Eurasia demonstrate that just as in Doniq, a girl is hardly ever welcomed at birth. While the birth of a boy brings unlimited joy to a family, that of a female infant causes some degree of dismay to them, for a girl is considered to be an unending burden and liability for parents. The reasons put forward for regarding girls as burdens are that the girls do not 'work' and thus cannot supplement the income of their families or be an economic insurance against their parents' old age. In addition, in the long run, daughters are a net economic loss for the family, because they take the Jehez - 'dowry' with them when they get married and continue to require material help from their parents' house throughout their lives. Moreover, unlike

a male child who stays within his own lineage and provides a new generation of direct descendant bearing his father's name, a girl leaves her own blood-kin and produces children to perpetuate the ancestral line, unity and economic status of a strange kin group. Finally, as will become clear in the case of Doniq also, girls entail more work and responsibility for the parents than boys do. They are seen as requiring more protection to develop "properly" and to be able to function in marriage and in the social structure of the community.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in Doniq, a woman will be more valued if she bears only sons for her husband or at least manages to produce far fewer daughters than sons. On the whole, a girl is regarded as a burden and liability and is not welcomed at birth. Even if female children are as necessary as males and are, in fact, complementary to the latter, the different values imposed on them by the culture and society lead people to treat them differently. The discrimination applied to female and male children is constantly apparent in the habitual practices, activities, and behaviour of people in the village. For village people girls are the symbol of God's curse and thus a woman who produces girls, especially successively is considered to be cursed by God. On the other hand, a boy is a symbol of blessing and parents who are granted him, are considered to be beings blessed of God who loves them and grants them this boon. In the village, the birth of a girl is a reason for teasing, taunting and insult. The greatest comfort and revenge a man can have is to see his enemy become the father of a girl child. In social relations, if one wants to offend another, one wishes her or him to become the parent of a girl. In general, people want more boys than girls and like the boys more. Most people prefer to have no girls at all, but since "it is in God's hands, one or two are enough".

1. See references on p. 242.

A boy is hoped for as the first child, for he is a symbol of good fortune and the family whose first child is a boy, can count on good luck for the rest of their lives, people say. Conversely, when their first child is a girl, the family expect perpetual bad luck and recurring economic loss and, what is more important, that the next children will all be girls - the greatest disaster of all. It follows that one of the most important concerns of a family or of a woman during her first pregnancy is whether the expected child will be a boy. They pray to God and make a vow at the shrine to go on the pilgrimage of Imām Rezā in Mashad, kill a sheep and distribute it among people and promise clothing and sweets to people if the expected child turns out to be a boy. Beliefs about how to predict the sex of unborn children also indicate the different values attached to each sex: A pregnant woman who is going to bear a girl, is believed to get uglier day by day. Her weight, voracity and temper are also used as gauges. She is said to swell up, become greedy and develop a bad character when she wants to give birth to a female, whereas the opposite is true for a male. When the labour is difficult, or the mother feels cold during the labour, it means she is giving birth to a girl, because a girl is a symbol of difficulty, coldness, uneasiness and inconvenience, but when the mother feels hot, the baby is guessed to be a boy who will bring warmth, rest and peace to the family.

The arrival of a male child is received with unlimited joy by the whole community. People compete with each other in running to give the good tidings to his relatives, especially to the men of the family, in order to get a good reward. There are always two or three women waiting at the doorstep of the room where a woman gives birth, watching the labour and listening very carefully to the first comments of the māmā - 'midwife'. If her first expression is "our eyes are brightened", or "it was expected" the baby is a boy and the women waiting run to inform his male relatives of the blessing. When the phrase is "it

brings happiness", it is a girl who in reality makes the bearer of the news angry and disappointed. The bearers of the news of the birth of a daughter to a father and other male relatives are ashamed and go with fear and trembling, lest their news is taken as teasing. Indeed, it is not necessary or if it is, it is not on the whole, a good thing to inform the males of the family of this kind of 'loss' and the one who tries to give the news is certain to receive abuse, rather than a present. People feel happy and share the good news with each other when their buffaloes give birth to either sex, but feel sad, disappointed and ashamed when a girl is born to them. The family tries to hide her birth from people as far as is possible or to repeat it falsely. Among the community when a male child is born, his father is admired and congratulated in public, because he has been an efficient man and has the capability of planting male seed. On the whole, men are very grateful to have generated boy children and the more boys a man has fathered, the more worthy of honour he is thought to be. He is not blamed for planting female seed and people try to act with indifference towards him when a daughter is born. It is considered the fault of the mother and of her womb which has borne a girl; and she must be blamed for the unfortunate event. She is the one to whom it is said, "shame on you!", "alas for you!" and "a pox on you!" after all she is not capable enough to bear sons. She is also the one who is frowned upon and left alone when she gives birth to a girl. An informant described as follows the attitudes and reactions of her husband towards the birth of one of her daughters,

"I already had two daughters. When my third one was born, my husband went away from the house for four days and left me in need of everything. After four days, he came back home frowning and not talking to me at all. I married in to the village from outside and had nobody to take care of me. My mother used to be brought from the town to help and look after me at the birth of my children. This time, because I had given birth successfully to girl children, he refused to fetch my



"mother, until some of his relatives came and gave advice to him and asked him to fetch my mother. When my mother came, he didn't pay any attention to her and refused to talk to her at all because her daughter had borne only girls. He still doesn't consider my last daughter as his child, though she is now four years old. He never buys anything for her, rarely talks to her and never shows any affection towards her. When my son was born, you don't know how happy he was! He used to do all the chores around the house, fetch water and do all the washing up. The house was full of butter, fruit and sweets. He bought a veil as a present for one of the informers and a pair of very good stockings and a dress for another."

Some men threaten their womenfolk that if they give birth to any more girls, they will kill them. Akbar was reported to have ill-treated his wife so continuously because she had had daughters one after the other that she died as a result.

In contrast to these cases, there have been few cases in which the menfolk have not regarded the birth of a girl as the fault of their women. These men believe that God has deemed it expedient and proper to give them daughters and thus the expression of any opposition and dissatisfaction would be displeasing to God and would be considered a sinful rebellion against him. They consecrate various items of food and distribute them among people as a mark of welcome to the will of God. They are kind and affectionate towards their wives who have given birth to girl babies in order not to make them any more down-cast than they are already at having been sent female children. It should be borne in mind that a few women, like some men, do not see bearing girl children as their own fault. Such women say, "God creates people and the matter of their sex is his choice and in his hands. What can a mother do?" They complain to God asking why he does not love them and has cursed them by giving them daughters. Nevertheless, while these women do not regard the birth of girl babies as their own fault, they feel ashamed when they give birth to a daughter, though

they do not refer to it publicly. The majority of women, however, like the majority of their male relatives regard the bearing of a female child as the woman's fault and blame themselves and actually accept the blame and punishment they receive from their men.

The different ways in which a mother is cared for after the birth of her baby, the various birth presents exchanged and, finally, the different ways of carrying out the customs associated with birth emphasize not only the lack of value placed on girl children but also the habit of regarding their births as their mothers' fault. The house in which a boy is born, is full of congratulations, delight and pleasure. There is chatter going on everywhere. The mother is well looked after, being made to drink bowl upon bowl of melted butter which is given quite customarily to a new mother to compensate for the energy she has lost. The opposite is true when a girl is born. The house is quiet, dark and cold. Nobody cares if the mother and child have any food or not. The mother might stay hungry for hours. A mother who has given birth to a female child is herself ashamed to ask for food, because her asking would be thought rude: "she thinks she has done something so good that she can ask for extra entertainment", people would say. I often heard reports that such and such a mother had refused to take anything at all for a few days after her baby girl was born, as a way of rebelling against God for sending her a daughter. Quite a few people visit the mother of a new born girl but the visitors are not given the same attention and entertained as they would be if they were visiting the mother of a boy. That is to say that they are not given quymāx - a special food made of sugar, butter and flour for entertainment after a birth. Quymāx is cooked and served several times a day in a household where there is a new baby boy, depending on the number and the intervals between groups of visitors. Various sums of money as gōbayh puli - 'umbilical cord money' - in addition to a dress for the mother or clothing for the boy

himself are taken by the visitors; whereas half of a sugar-loaf or a small box of sweets is taken to a girl's mother. The presents taken when visiting a boy or his mother are and should always be more expensive and valuable than the ones taken to a girl's mother.

There are also several rituals which reinforce the value attached to each sex: when a new born boy baby is about seven days old, the parents hold a naming ceremony. All relatives and friends, along with the village mullā (religious leader) or one of the villagers who are familiar with religious matters, are invited to dinner. They usually bring sweets and sugar loaves as presents. After the dinner is over, the mullā whispers into the child's ear, first the name of one of the Imams and the Shi'a creed of faith, "There is no God, but Allah, Mo-hammad is your Prophet and Ali is your emissary". Then he whispers the child's own name. After that the boy is wrapped in a black veil with needles and pins sticking out all round his head. This symbolizes the belief that whoever (the evil eye and other spirits) wants to take him away will be pricked in the hand by the needles and prevented from doing any harm to the boy. On the tenth day after the birth, which is the on hāmāmi - 'birth bath of the child and mother' - all relatives and friends are invited to accompany the child and his mother to the public bath in the town and have a meal with the mother. This ceremony is quite ostentatious and full of meaning. These ceremonies are never held for a baby girl. Even if her parents might want to give a party and celebrate her naming and bathing days, they are afraid to be teased for doing so. Finally little boys are better cared for, better nourished and better dressed as far as possible. A baby boy's needs are paid more attention by the parents and the trouble he gives is welcomed happily, but inconvenience caused by a girl is taken badly. For instance, because she wants to take tender care of her beloved child and endear herself to him, a mother cannot allow herself to wean him within the expected time, because he

might fret a lot and die. If the child after him is a girl, that is all to the good. The mother seizes the opportunity to let her little boy share her milk, even reserving the greater amount of it for him. It is believed that boy infants are always vulnerable to the malicious influence of the evil eye - göz. They are often concealed from people. When a mother goes to a party, she prefers to leave him with other female relatives of the household, or if she takes him with her, she conceals him behind her veil during the party and is often reluctant for some one to look at him or ask anything about him. She refuses to feed him or give him anything to eat in front of people, lest he show a good appetite and be exposed to the evil eye. To ward off the evil-eye from the boy, a small volume of Quran wrapped in a piece of cloth is pinned to the boy's clothes, along with some hair from a cat, some wild rue - üzzerrih - a dog's excrement, some bread cooked in a special way (usually in a round form) and coloured beads named göz tikāni. Or often some wild rue is burned and the child is turned round over its smoke and some of its ashes are rubbed on his forehead. When he falls ill, the parents make an effort to save him at all costs, for they need him for the future. They believe that whatever they spend on him, will be compensated for when he grow up and works.

From the beginning, death is wished on a girl. Parents intentionally do not take care of her. Nor do they take her to the doctor when she is ill; they simply let her die. One informant reported,

"Akram had three daughters in a row and didn't have any son. Her husband and she didn't feel happy with them. The mother used to leave them in the house, even the very young one and chat with other women at the doorstep for hours. The little one used to scream for hours, but the mother just ignored her. Or she used to leave her daughter in the street in a dreadful state and as a result she died last year."



The mother herself described the reason for the death of her daughter as follows:

"She was being bottle-fed and we used to buy her milk from the town. One day her milk was finished and because he was busy in the field her father didn't have any time to go to the town to buy it. She screamed for two days and died."

In another case, a woman reported,

"Tuba had five daughters, one of whom died last year. From the moment of the birth of each girl, the parents used to wish death on them, but death was not their gesmat - 'fate'. One of them just fell ill last year and her father refused to take her to the doctor whatever we said to him by way of advice, until she died."

Something worth commenting on is that while I was taking a census on the mortality rate of children, most of the girl babies who died were reported to have been smothered; either their mothers were sleepy and fell onto them while feeding them or their heads were covered with blankets so that they were smothered. Although women did not admit directly that they had intentionally smothered the babies, one could easily see from the faces of the women and by the way they responded to the question that they had done it on purpose. In response to the question "why are boys not smothered?", some women smiled and said that everyone wanted to get rid of girls and some others answered that they didn't know, but what they knew all about was that such an early death and smothering were only for girls and not for boys. The women looked at each other as if they knew something about each other's tricks, but did not want a stranger to find out about what they'd been doing. Finally, when a child is miscarried or dies, if it is a boy, people feel more sorry and mourn more than if it is a girl - in which case there is very little sorrow. When a female child has died, women usually comfort and console her mother by saying,

"don't worry, she has gone for a nine month's journey", indicating that after nine months she will have a male baby instead.

Since the society is male-dominated, all social and economic institutions are in men's control, and it follows that there will be a premium placed on male birth. And

"In as much as the society is interested in the latter, there will be a corresponding slackness and even lack of interest in female children."<sup>1</sup>

When the villagers are asked about the necessity and importance of children, they continuously emphasize the need for male children and as regards female children, they either keep quiet or introduce them as unnecessary and as a burden and calamity - müsibat. Certainly a girl cannot carry on her father's line. As the villagers put it themselves, qiz dadanin yuridin keçirdar - a girl demolishes her father's house. She can neither assure the perpetuation, strength and union of her family and lineage nor support her parents in their old age. Girls do not belong, the villagers said, to their own parents as the boys do. The former are guests - qonāx of their parents who have only trouble in bringing them up and eventually give them to others, after which they themselves are dependent on others and thus cannot act as insurance for their parents. In addition, girls are the cause of problems and worry for their parents. Most parents claimed that they always worried about their daughters - about when and to whom they would get married and how they would be treated in their husband's households. Whereas boys do not cause this sort of problem. They bring in other people's daughters, and the option lies with the boys and their parents as to how to behave towards them. Besides, one important factor which was very often emphasized,

1. Appadorai, op. cit., pp. 47-9.

in representing girl children as burdens, liabilities and causes of worry is the set of expectations which are placed on the behaviour of girls to establish them honourably within society itself and in their marital state. Parents often complained about the troubles a girl gives them, not because of the difficulties she brings in early childhood, but because of the problems and difficulties they encounter in bringing her up. In the chapter on marriage there is a full discussion of how a girl's behaviour and hymen are all-important in considering her as a man's wife; of how vital they are in proving her family's honour, how bad an effect the girl's misbehaviour has on her family reputation and her own marriage opportunities, and how much trouble parents take in protecting her demeanour and virginity. If she so much as moves her head slightly to the side by a glance at others, or does not cover her head and face properly with her veil, or even exchanges a word with a man, the 'zeal' and reputation of her father, brothers and other male kin would be destroyed. The result is that people come to dread the burden of having daughters.

Besides, girls are considered to be costly and a drain on family resources. They were often referred to as čāpān Tālān - 'plunderers'. It is believed that they do not work and are dependent on their parents, they take away Jehez - 'dowry' - when they get married and reduce their parents to extremity - mağbun elamayh - and continue taking from their parents' household throughout their lives. Whereas when a boy gets married, he makes his parents bud - 'wealthy'. "Boys are always 'bringers' - gatiran olār; girls are always 'takers' - apārān olār" was a saying often quoted by people. It is true, as Ester Boserup also points out, that generally in communities which practise the seclusion of their womenfolk and in which a substantial dowry is obligatory for a girl when she marries, families try their best to provide the biggest dowry they can, even if this means going deeply into debt. It follows that raising daughters is necessarily considered a task full of

tribulations.<sup>1</sup>

### Mothers of sons

For the villagers, sons are the wealth of the family - övin dölati; the more their numbers, the greater the wealth of the family and the more prosperously a family lives. In other words, the "herdsize" of a villager, as an informant said it, grows with "sonsize". The larger the number of sons, the larger the herd and the more prestigious and powerful their owner. Therefore, a mother who bears many sons for her husband, is considered an ideal wife and gains elevated social status. The status of a husband and wife is raised by the number and the ages of their sons. The more living children in a family, especially sons, the more both the husband and wife are regarded with respect in their separate male and female spheres: In social interactions within the community of women, the mother of many sons is highly respected and is given more honour than others. She is pointed at and introduced to strange visitors with words like "such and such a woman is the mother of five or seven sons", and the mother feels pride in herself. Apart from social status, a woman's status in her family in relation to her husband and in-laws also changes with the number of her living sons. In previous pages it has been indicated that a woman takes root - kök ātār in her husband's group by giving proof of her fertility, but the root becomes thicker and stronger as a woman adds to the number of her sons, so that, as an informant pointed out,

"no one is able to pull the root out and if anyone wants to "uproot" the woman, it would now be very difficult and would need a lot of energy and trouble."

Women in Doniq referred to the belief that sons are a mother's kabin - (mahr); the more their numbers, the more it is as if the amount of one's kabin had been increased - kabin being

1. Boserup, op. cit., p. 43-49.



the large amount of money which is considered to be a deterrent to maltreatment by a husband and to divorce by him, as well as making a woman honourable in her husband's house. Some others mentioned the idea that a woman with many sons becomes like a bārri āgī - 'fruitful tree' - which is treated and attended quite differently from one without fruit or with less fruit. The former is certain to be given more importance and attention.

The security and confidence which a woman gains with bearing sons makes her daring, outspoken, and perhaps disobedient in her dealings with her husband and his family. If she lives with her in-laws, she takes advantage of her sons for her political ends; to separate her husband from his family and set up an independent household where she may enjoy a freer, less restricted life, may have more control over family resources, be able to bind her sons securely to her and make sure of their loyalty for her old age. Women in the village always preferred to live independently from their in-laws. Most of them who had already experienced living in an extended household said that they would prefer to stay hungry and yet have an independent household of their own in order to be free of the restrictions, quarrels and competition common in extended families. They always referred to the maxim that āyrlīx šālīxdī - 'separation and living independently is like living like a king and having his authority and sovereignty'. You have your own way of life, they said. It is for yourself to decide whether or not to work harder, choose to be thrifty or spend extravagantly and most important of all, your talking, eating, and sitting down will no longer have to be subject to the permission of your elders and any decisions related to yourself and your children will no longer have to be taken by the older generation of the household. Therefore, after giving birth to many children, especially male children, and establishing her relationship with her husband on a firm basis, a woman makes an effort, directly or indirectly, to promote the disintegration of

the extended household - "the lifetime creation of her mother-in-law" - to free herself from the limitations imposed on her when she lives communally and ensure solidarity among her own offspring. She cannot ask her husband directly to separate himself from his parents, because he is more loyal to them than his wife and children and thus would not accept his wife's suggestion until he himself considered a move desirable. Instead she tries to find a subtle and indirect way to persuade her husband to establish an independent household for her. She takes advantage of her own self-confidence, brought about by the bearing of sons, and starts to compete with her in-laws and to disobey them, especially her mother-in-law. Before she had children, she never spoke loudly in her mother-in-law's presence lest it be taken as disobedience and disrespect. Now she competes with her mother-in-law by no longer working so hard, ignoring most of her orders and often giving her retorts, the most insulting and hurtful kind of disrespect.

Further, the young daughter-in-law tries to disclose her mother-in-law's secrets to the male members of the household in order to make them take up a negative attitude towards her and weaken their loyalty. Recently, for instance, a daughter-in-law who intended to separate herself from her in-laws told her husband and father-in-law about and then showed them some butter which had been stolen by her mother-in-law from the dairy products of the household and hidden behind the bedding to be bartered with the pedlar. These sorts of affairs are, however, most irritating for a mother-in-law whose first important contract with her daughter-in-law when she enters her household is an agreement to be loyal and faithful to her secrets in front of the household menfolk. Of course, in response to the competition of the daughter-in-law and her attempts to exert influence, a mother-in-law is definitely not quiet or passive. Certainly, because her own political standing is threatened, a mother-in-law will automatically defend her position. At stake is the little bit of influence which she has achieved in the fam-

ily owing to her age and her having borne many children, and to her having established loyalty in her son through years of exerting patient labour on his behalf. If cornered she may take the severest actions in response to her daughter-in-law's "mutiny". There arises an extensive competition and quarrel between the younger and older women of the household which finally compels the male members to split the extended family.

Of course, conflict and competition among women, especially between a woman and her in-laws (mother and sisters-in-law, HBW and HZ) is not restricted to Doniq. It is common among many communities. One dimension which is suggested as affecting the relationships of women, is the relative integration or separation of political and domestic spheres. In societies where the domestic and political spheres are relatively integrated and authority within the family circle is quite equally distributed, allowing for and even emphasizing individual independence, women have extensive control over their own lives and their strategies focus on cooperation for every day activities and are "economic" in nature. On the other hand in many societies, including Doniq, where domestic and political life is kept quite separate and most power and authority is vested in men only so that men make the important decisions outside home in a wider political arena, women must accomplish what they want to do by "working through men", either their husbands or their sons, and so one woman's aims and interests never coincide with another's and competition and argument are a 'natural' aspect of their lives.<sup>1</sup>

In Doniq, as a young bride, a woman enters a patrilocal and patrilineal household at the lowest social level, but as she gives birth and her children grow up, her status changes in

1. Collier, "Women in politics" in Rosaldo and Lamphere (eds.), op. cit.; Lamphere, "Strategies Cooperation..." in Rosaldo and Lamphere (eds.) op. loc.p.100; Wolf, "Chinese women..." op. cit., p. 168.

relative terms and she gains influence with her husband. She uses this influence to build loyalty in her own children to establish security for her old age. This process, however, interferes with the stability of the family already established by the young wife's mother-in-law, and thus conflict and competitions grow up between them. Further, in the independent household as the sons of a woman grow up, she is able to relieve herself gradually of the ill-usage and beatings once often given her by her husband. A husband gives up wife-beating as she adds to the number of his sons and as his sons grow up. One woman remarked,

"God should protect all sons. Before my eldest son finished his military service and came back to the village, his father used to beat me up and swear at me all day long. As soon as my son came back his father didn't dare to say anything to me. Yesterday I had gone to my sister's house to give her a hand in weaving a carpet. As soon as the men of the village saw me in the street, they told my husband. Because I hadn't got permission from him, he was very angry. He came back home very angry and asked my son where his mother had gone to. My son asked him what he wanted to do to me. Did he want to be breast-fed! When I came back, he didn't even ask where I had been. I'd have got an awful beating if my son hadn't been at home. He is very useful for me, as other sons are for their own mothers - God should protect all of them."

In short, when she has produced children, particularly sons and has increased their numbers a woman gains social and family status which was denied to her before. As a result women in the village are very willing to add to the number of their children rather than taking measures to avoid having more. As children are very vital to the political, social and economic positions of families and are effective in determining the family and social status of the mothers themselves, it follows that for the village women it seems beyond imagination that any woman would of her own accord stop producing such valuable things



unless God wishes it. Women, particularly older ones who are more conservative, believe that a woman should continue to produce children until her "body's water dries up" (that is until menopause) and "the factory stops by itself". In particular, a woman should make an effort to take as much advantage as possible of her fertile periods. A proverb was often quoted by women to the effect that while the oven is hot you should try to bake as much bread as you can, because when the oven gets cold, it won't accept any bread at all - Tandır isti isti, çöreyi galayh tez tez yâpāsān qutārāsān.

Thus, if a woman stops producing children for a while or there is a gap between her children, everybody in the village attempts to find out the reason. People will chat and gossip, suggesting that her womb is perhaps dried up and is not fertile anymore, or that her husband probably does not like her any more and doesn't sleep with her or that she might have been cursed by God who has withdrawn his mercy and blessing from her; and finally they guess that something might be wrong with the virility of her husband. The village women compete with each other in getting pregnant and giving birth. There are always anxious inquiries about each other's pregnancies and number of their sons. If a woman is informed that one of her competitors has got pregnant earlier than she has, particularly if they gave birth to their last children at the same time, her feelings of jealousy are immediately stimulated and she makes an effort to conceive as soon as possible. A woman who conceives at short intervals is a target of begrudging admiration and jealousy. Conceiving at short intervals, or at least within an expected length of time is considered to be a mark of God's concern and love. Sometimes, out of jealousy, some women criticize the woman who conceives at very short intervals. But the latter notices the real feeling behind the criticism and responds by telling her that "God grants their sustenance and the ground endures their weight - Ruzisīn Āllāh yetirir, āğirriğin yer götiri", why should you feel so upset?!

Or she responds by saying that when the mouth of a cat doesn't catch the meat, it says the meat smells bad, meaning by this that when God does not extend his bounty to everybody, they say it is bad anyway.

Why are sons considered so valuable? Sons play major roles in the economy of families. In other words, they form an important economic unit in the village society. They are involved in work in the pastures and in agricultural tasks. The little ones (5-6) tend animals and those who are somewhat older work on the land - ploughing, planting, watering and harvesting along with their fathers or other older male relatives. It is very difficult for a father to deal with work if he is without sons. Even two or three sons are not sufficient for a father in the economic system of the village where all the pastoral and agricultural affairs are carried out under the most primitive conditions. If a son is sent to herd animals some distance from home, another two or three are needed to work under the father's supervision in the field. In short, in a pastoral and agricultural society like Doniq sons are manpower and without them a family has to resort to costly contractual arrangements for the care of its herds and help on the land. A family without sons usually pays a hundred pounds to hire a boy from another family to herd their animals for three months in the summer time. Moreover, because the society is patrilineal (where the line and title of a family is recognized through a male), a male child is certainly necessary to continue his family's line and provide his father with descendants. Without a son, a family's line becomes extinct and is forgotten. Besides this, sons inherit the land and maintain and keep up the parental household on which their sisters depend. As the villagers themselves referred to it: a son keeps his father's house bright and alive - oğil dadanin yurdin diri va işixli sâxlâr.

In addition, in a pastoral and agricultural society like Doniq, every family requires sons because they constitute an essential

political and defensive force to protect and retaliate against violation of person and property. In pastoral and agricultural societies as Schneider suggests,

"it is very difficult to find an organizational solution to regulate the access of men and animals to natural resources, due to compelling ecological problems. An extensive conflict arises over abuse pasturing, that is, the negligent or deliberate action of one group which permits animals to stray over a boundary to graze on the grass of a neighbouring group."<sup>1</sup>

Quite often the villagers of Doniq become involved in factions and come into conflict with insiders or with neighbouring villages over land, pasturing, water and irrigation of the land. Quarrels occur, for instance when someone deliberately diverts another person's water-supply to his own strip of land. Thus it is in the interests of each family and kin-group to have many men in the family; and in fact the kin-group is perpetuated, strengthened and united by the number of its sons.

Sons are important too in establishing an individual's self-respect. In the village society, a man who is without sons, is not respected among the men's community. Ali Abāss who had nine daughters but no son, was more vulnerable than men with sons to people's insults and attacks. Once while he was defending himself against an attack by two dogs, the owner of one of the dogs, a man who was working on the roof of his own house and had been watching the incident, threw a sickle with which he had been working, towards Ali Abāss and hurt his head seriously. Most people giving their judgements on the event said that if Ali Abāss had had a son, people would not have dared to insult him and injure his head like that just because of a dog which he was defending himself against: people

1. Schneider, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4; see also Beck and Keddie, "Introduction", in Beck and Keddie (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

would either have been afraid of his son or would have respected him because he had a son and would not have dared to offend him.

Sons are also insurance against the exigencies of old age for they help provide for their aging parents. Apart from the economic, political and social importance of sons for their families, they are also believed to be vital in one's spiritual life. It is said that it is a great honour for a parent to be carried to the cemetery and buried by the hand of his or her son. The funeral of a father or mother who is without a son, is not honourable, and has no dignity and affection about it. It is believed that sons bring light to their parents' graves and in the other world - qabirīn īṣīlāndīrār - indicating that they make their parents' souls happy and diminish their sins in the other world by distributing blessed foods in the name of God and the Imams and by reading the Quran. Finally, male children are important for the womenfolk of the family group. A woman who has a large number of male kin (brothers, uncles and so on) benefits from a more honourable life. Her marriage is arranged honourably because her husband's kin give more respect to her kinsmen and her position in her husband's house differs from that of a woman who does not have a large male kingroup. She is honoured by her husband and his family and her in-laws are more careful in their behaviour towards her.

#### Pregnancy is a cause for shame

Even though children are so vital for families and barrenness for a woman is not acceptable and brings a woman harsh reactions and cruel treatment, pregnancy and childbirth are nevertheless matters of shame and embarrassment.

Indeed, traditions and social values enormously affect a woman's position during pregnancy and involve her in many difficulties. It has been indicated in Chapter three that there is



an attempt made before a young girl's marriage to keep her innocent and ignorant about sexual matters so that she will stay chaste and marriageable. But women are also kept ignorant about sexual questions even after they are married. This time it is merely because of the modesty required by custom for 'respect'. Since they acknowledge the relationship of pregnancy with sexual intercourse, pregnancy is considered shameful and it is disrespectful to mention anything connected with pregnancy. In the hierarchical relationships between women which are mostly perpetuated in accordance with their ages, a young woman is not allowed to refer to marital problems, pregnancy or childbirth in the presence of a middle-aged woman and the latter in her turn refuses to say anything about pregnancy in front of an old woman. Any reference to pregnancy and childbirth by a young woman in front of her seniors is considered immodest and disrespectful towards the older woman. A senior woman might refer to her pregnancy in front of a woman who is her junior but when she wants to find out anything concerning the pregnancy of a younger woman, she does not inquire directly from the pregnant woman herself. For instance, when a mother wants to find out which month of pregnancy her daughter is in, she asks one of her daughter's neighbours or friends instead of her daughter herself. By the same token, a young newly-married woman who has entered marriage ignorant about sexual matters, does not dare to gain any information about pregnancy from older relatives or strange women, because she would be thought immodest. Quite a number of young women in talking about their first pregnancy told me that they didn't know they were pregnant until the first movement of the baby. An informant said,

"... I noticed something was moving in my belly. First I thought it was a worm. I was shocked and frightened so that I got a terrible headache and still suffer from the same headache."

Another woman continued,

"I didn't know anything about pregnancy. One day I felt something moving in my abdomen. I thought it was an animal. In desperation and embarrassment I asked my husband's brother's wife, who is older than I am. She said it was a baby and I was pregnant. I didn't believe her until it was born."

Thus, although children are very much in demand and greatly desired, a pregnant woman feels ashamed and embarrassed during pregnancy because of its connection with sexual intercourse. A woman's first pregnancy is intentionally broadcast to assure people of her fertility and avoid their gossip, but after she has had her first child a woman tries to avoid drawing attention to her pregnancy. Until she is six or seven months pregnant a woman denies being pregnant when she is talking to other women, even those of her own age group, and after this period, when pregnancy gradually becomes obvious, she changes her clothing for more bulky and wrinkled garments - quite a familiar syndrome in the village, and keeps her veil loose around herself to draw less attention to her figure. It should be borne in mind that a village woman's physical condition is very weak because of malnutrition and hard work, and so the kind of clothing she wears allows her to keep her pregnancy undetected well on into its later stages. One might think that when children are of such importance in the village, women would be very proud of themselves during pregnancy and that they would be inclined to make their condition known publicly rather than denying it or keeping it a secret. It is true that a woman is very proud of herself during pregnancy and on some occasions which seem to demand it - for instance, when she wants to show off to a childless woman or to a woman who has fewer children than she has, she might make her pregnancy known, but in most cases women prefer to keep their pregnancy secret.

Apart from the norms of 'modesty' and 'shame' which oblige women to hide their pregnancy, especially in the presence of old-

er women and male members of the family, another important factor is the 'evil-eye'. Pregnancy and childbirth, particularly when achieved regularly and successively, are believed to be vulnerable to the 'evil-eye' - göz. Therefore, women are afraid to draw attention to their pregnancies and have the evil-eye cast on them since it is believed to cause the baby to be aborted or to kill the mother and the baby during the labour. In addition, a woman worries lest her fertility should be threatened by the use of amulets and witchcraft which are alleged to be prepared by one's enemies and rivals. The two women who had lost the power to conceive again after giving birth to only one child believed that they had been sterilized through prayers written by their in-laws. One of them said that she had asked one of the most religious people in the village, who was also a prayer writer, to look at the prayer book and see what had made her stop being fertile. She was told that her productive capacity had been affected by a prayer. This prayer had been read over wheat which had been eaten by a black hen and then the black hen had been eaten by a dog. It was suggested that in order to make the prayer ineffective, she should feed nine kilograms of consecrated wheat to a black hen and give the black hen to a dog to eat and that finally she herself should eat a piece of the dog's meat. But she refused to do so. However it is clear that women fear being cursed by the evil-eye or being affected by prayer-spells and this helps to prevent them from making a fuss about their pregnancy and motivates them to conceal it as far as possible.

Then again, women often miscarry their babies because of all the wearisome and heavy work they have to do during pregnancy and because of their husband's maltreatment (many women claimed that they had miscarried because of doing heavy work, being kicked by animals when milking them and being beaten up by their husbands). Having a miscarriage is regarded as a woman's fault, even if it might have a clear-cut cause, and is considered a shame and misfortune for her. A woman is

blamed and teased when she has a miscarriage and people say she has not been capable enough to take good care of the baby in her womb, or that her womb is diseased and cannot hold the baby properly or that she is cursed by God. This is another reason why a woman prefers to keep her pregnancy secret. She will avoid the blame and the rejoicing at her misfortune if she should have a miscarriage. Finally competition in child bearing is also one of the factors which make women deny being pregnant. By hiding their condition they may get ahead of their competitors. However women said that they were able to tell when others were pregnant from the position of their eye-lashes. When the eye-lashes appeared to grow out in pairs, a woman was said to be pregnant.

Under the circumstances of a woman's having to hide her pregnancy from people because of 'modesty' and 'respect', because of being vulnerable to the evil-eye and likely to be blamed by people if she suffers a miscarriage, and also because of competition with other women over child bearing, she endures a great many difficulties during pregnancy. Naturally, a woman has an abnormal appetite during pregnancy, but she cannot satisfy it properly due to restrictions placed upon her by her family. If she lives with her in-laws, there is little or no possibility for her to satisfy her distorted appetite which is called yerih lamayh - in local language. And in an independent household where a woman lives with her husband and children, although a husband normally knows about the fact that she is pregnant, most women reported that their husbands do not sympathise with them during their pregnancies. Many middle-aged women said that even if their husbands might have the habit of buying various treats for them under ordinary conditions, they stop providing these "goodies" as soon as they are informed that their wives are pregnant, especially if they know that the women fancy these particular delicacies. The women did not know what reason might be behind such behaviour on the part of their husbands during women's pregnancies. Only one of the



women explained that her husband had never believed in yerih lamayh - and always said that women are naturally too greedy - gòdanpah - and make pregnancy an excuse to ask their husbands for many things. The women also agreed that if a close relative or neighbour who knew about their pregnancy were to prepare some item of food and bring it for them, their husbands would refuse to accept it, blaming their wives for letting people know about their condition and their yerih. Despite all these difficulties, women do succeed, more or less, in satisfying their yerih. Those living with their in-laws satisfy their depraved appetites in their parents' or sometimes in their older married sisters' households without referring to their pregnancies. The possibilities are more extensive for women who live in independent households. They "steal" wheat, wool, butter and eggs and barter them with čarči for the foodstuffs they crave. If the pedlar is not available, women ask a person they trust to barter their goods in the village shop. They themselves never barter articles in the village shop, because their position and secrets would then be disclosed to their husbands and to other people. In fact, one woman who is poor and has more freedom in moving around the village and going into the town by herself (something it is impossible for other women to do alone) meets most of the women's needs, especially during their pregnancies and keeps their secrets faithfully. She is given money and instructed to purchase for various women some items which cannot be found in the village. It was often reported that during pregnancy women mostly crave for meat which is not available in the village. Of course, in comparison with times in the past when villagers waited for meat until someone's animal fell sick and was killed and sold to the people very cheaply, nowadays animals are occasionally killed and sold in the village shop, but this happens only from time to time. An informant said that her neighbour longed for meat during her pregnancy. Failing to get it, in desperation she ate a piece of meat of their donkey which had just died. On the whole, women agreed that times are better than they were and

at the present day they can manage somehow or other - by trading with the pedlar or buying from the village shop and the town, to obtain the titbits they fancy during pregnancy; whereas this was not possible a few years ago.

In addition, two women who are close friends and are in the same age group, may set up a reciprocal cooperative agreement in order to help each other during pregnancies. For example when one woman's husband will not cooperate or she is unable to buy something for herself, the other one supplies the item for her if at all possible. Zinab and Batool were two close neighbours and friends who were very faithful to each other's secrets. Zinab was pregnant and craved for vegetables which had to be provided from the town. She used to go to the desert and eat grass until without mentioning anything about Zinab and her craving Batool, her close friend, asked her own husband to buy some vegetables when he went to the town. Generally, doing a good deed for a pregnant woman is considered an act of piety. But on the whole, women are very cautious as regards the people from whom they accept a Tika - 'a piece of something' - for a child's behaviour and character are believed to be derived directly from the individual from whom his mother has accepted a Tika in her pregnancy. Therefore women are very careful, even in their cooperative relationship with a close friend to choose a person of suitable personality and good character. There is no general belief about what is or is not appropriate to eat during pregnancy, except one taboo against a pregnant woman eating onion, because the eyes of her child would become watery. There is also no restrictions on women's activities in pregnancy except that a pregnant woman should not attend funerals - the belief being that she will die soon after the birth.

#### Organization of childbirth

As women cooperate with each other during their pregnancies,

so their help and cooperation with each other is also essential when they actually give birth. In extended families, where women live with their in-laws, the older women (mother-in-law and older sisters-in-law; HBW, HZ) do not assist younger women on occasions of childbirth. It is considered shameful, immodest and disrespect if a younger women's body or voice is seen or heard in labour by the older females of the households. When a younger daughter-in-law gives birth, her older female in-laws leave the room where childbirth is taking place and the male relatives leave the house completely for two or three days. A daughter-in-law's own mother or older married sister is asked to help her through the childbirth. Usually, a woman gives birth to her first child in her parents' house, for she is not as experienced as the woman who has given birth to many children and has learned how to suppress her cries in labour and give birth modestly, with proper consideration for her in-laws. A woman who is having her first baby is inexperienced and might raise an uproar during labour and make herself immodest. In addition, since a woman does not belong to her husband's group until the birth of a child, especially a son, her parents are afraid that her in-laws might not feel a real responsibility towards her and might leave her to die in labour. Parents see it as expedient to take their daughter to give birth to her first child in their house. In the case of subsequent babies women normally give birth in their in-laws' households, for their parents believe that children belong to husbands and since they benefit from them, why should the wife's family bear the expenses of their births? While, out of respect for her own age, an older female in-law does not take part when a younger daughter-in-law gives birth, it is necessary for a young woman to give assistance when her older female in-laws have their babies - to help and take care of them.

During the hours of labour, apart from the relatives, close neighbours and friends also gather in the room, chatting and telling anecdotes about the history of their own deliveries. Two

or three years ago the village had a māmā - 'midwife' - who had inherited her job from her own mother. She helped women with delivery and she used to stay with a mother and her new baby for three days after the birth believing that her knowledge and presence warded off from the mother and child the āl - 'a wandering witch-like spirit' - which is believed to injure the child and its mother. The māmā was an expert and specialist in herbal and magical remedies and her profession was considered necessary, nor merely honorary. For cutting the umbilical cord and tending the child and mother for three days she used to be paid 30 Tomān (£2) in cash and in kind she received items such as a scarf, a shirt or a chicken. The māmā used to be able to tell from the position of women in labour whether they would give birth easily or need to be taken to a town doctor.<sup>1</sup> Two or three years ago when the road of the village had not yet been constructed, many women who had difficulty in labour were reported to have died on their way to the town doctor. They used to be transported by donkey, the back of the animal being broadened and made smooth by straw and two straw stuffed bags which were tied to the sides of the donkey to broaden its back and enable the woman in labour to lie down on it rather than have to sit. A woman who had given birth to her last child four years previously said that her last labour was a difficult one. She was therefore advised by the māmā to be taken to the town. It was winter time and a very cold, foggy and snowy day when she was taken to the doctor. On the way, while crossing a river, she slid from the back of the donkey and fell into the river, but her male relatives managed to catch her. Many cases of this kind were reported.

Nowadays, however, the village māmā is old and so ill that she is hardly able to move, though she is occasionally able to be of help. Therefore, the village women themselves help each other with childbirth - mothers help their daughters, sisters give a hand to sisters, neighbours to neighbours. In short, any woman who has herself given birth to a few children, can

1. The practices and beliefs regarding the āl and māmā are similar to those observed and described in more detail by N. Tapper (pp. 68-77).



be designated as midwife. Sometimes even, some women who have given birth to several children and are to some extent experienced, prefer to be alone for the delivery rather than informing any relatives. Faridah who had recently given birth to her eighth child and was living in an independent household, said that she had locked the door of her house and given birth by herself, sometimes asking her fourteen year-old daughter to fetch things to her. Many other women remarked that they would mostly like to give birth alone, because many women gather in the room and disturb them rather than assisting them. Besides that, after the delivery is over, they mimic and make fun of the behaviour and attitude of the woman who was in labour. Although there is no māmā to estimate the state of women in labour, women were confident that they themselves are relatively familiar with the situation of women in labour. In the case of difficult labour, for instance bleeding before the actual birth or unusually lengthy labour, they recommend their male relatives to take the pregnant woman to the town doctor. A fifty year-old informant said,

"Ten years ago when a woman died in labour because of excessive bleeding, we didn't understand it. We used to say āl came and took her liver - āl ūrayin āpārdi. Or we used to stick a lock to her skirt or give her water to drink in which a particular prayer had been washed, and put on her head a tehel kilid - a 'bowl in which forty Quranic verses are written to keep away āl from the woman in labour and stop her bleeding'."

Of course, some people still believe in these ideas, ascribing any excessive bleeding and death in childbirth to āl, or to gesmat - 'fate' - believing that whatever is in one's gesmat, will be dealt out to her by God and that no doctor or anybody else can stay the hands of God and fate. In contrast to this group of women there is another group who do not ascribe excessive bleeding or death in childbirth to āl or fate, but who do not feel altogether happy either about giving birth with a

doctor, for various social and economic reasons. One section of this group believe that their husbands' geyrat - 'zeal and honour' - will not permit them to be seen by male doctors. Therefore, they are not taken to the doctor, even if their condition during labour is precarious. One woman described her own case:

"I always give birth in a very dangerous state. I usually bleed during the whole nine months of pregnancy. My labour lasts for a week and my children mostly come out with hands or feet first. After the birth I am seriously ill for four or five months. Even so my husband never allows me to go and give birth in the hospital in the town, because he is too geyrattidi - 'zealous' and doesn't want a strange man (doctor) to see his wife. He would prefer his wife to die in labour rather than be seen and examined by a male doctor."

Other women believed that a doctor is halāl - 'religiously lawful and permitted' - and is meant to rescue people, but they said that they were prevented by other villagers from making use of the doctor's services. Most people in Doniq tease and ridicule a man and his wife if the woman has a baby in the town hospital, saying that she has been examined by many male doctors in the hospital and has therefore become 'dishonoured and shameless' and that her husband has become 'zealless'. Clearly some people are inhibited and held back by the thought of what others might say or do. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the economic problems of the villagers and the cost of hospital and medicine are also taken into account in people's decisions and shape their viewpoints about giving birth with the help of a doctor. It was often said to me that instead of paying for the doctor and for medicines, it is reasonable to spend the same amount for butter and feed it to the mother who has just given birth, to restore her lost strength.

In fact, almost all village women give birth at home. When lab-

our begins, a place like an ojāx - 'traditional stove' - which is often open at the front, is made of bricks or stones at the lower end of the room and some ashes from the oven are poured into the centre of the ojāx to absorb discharges. The woman in labour sits on the ojāx and is supported by two or three women from the front and behind while many other women sit in the room giving their advice and suggestions. Childbirth is an occasion on which women feel that they are particularly in their own sphere and have more power to make decisions without letting any man interfere. The woman who is designated as midwife kneels behind the woman in labour, making appropriate observations, reporting them to the women sitting in the room and asking for their recommendations and guidance. Out of modesty, none of the woman's clothes are taken off. Only in the final stage of labour her underpants are drawn down. In the case of a difficult labour, a greased hand is inserted into the vagina. After the child is born, household scissors are used to cut the umbilical cord. If the placenta is slow to emerge after the birth, the mother is given an empty bottle to push or her abdomen is massaged by women until the placenta is expelled. Throughout this time, the woman endures the pain, because childbirth is not merely a distinguishing mark of her sex but is her glory through which she gains social and family status and new life.

After the delivery is over, the bed of the new mother is covered with ashes and thick outworn clothes to prevent the mattress from getting stained. Generally it is believed that after parturition a mother and child are vulnerable to the evil-eye and āl. Āl is a tall woman who wears a white dress, wears multi-coloured beads and roams the pastures at night. A new mother is believed to be stolen by the āl once every minute and consequently people try to ward off the āl from the mother and child. To keep away the āl, an iron object is believed to be effective. Usually scissors or a knife are kept along with some onions under the bed of the mother for forty days, in the

belief that the knife frightens the āl out of the coming and taking the mother and child away and that the onions cure all her pain by keeping the āl away from her. The knife or scissors used to ward off the āl and the evil-eye are washed under the feet of the mother when she washes herself ceremonially on the fortieth day after giving birth. Besides these precautions the mother and new born child are never left alone in the room, because the āl or evil-eye might enter and injure them or substitute a changling for the real baby. Even the presence of a young child is considered enough to frighten away the āl.

After childbirth, owing to the bulk of her housework, a mother cannot rest for more than two or three days. During these few days one of her close relatives or neighbours takes care of her and of her children and does her domestic chores. Of course, bearing in mind the heavy load of the work in the village, the job is very demanding and burdensome for the women who has to carry out her own domestic tasks as well as the routines of the woman who has given birth. As a result a woman who gives birth is not likely to rest for more than two days in order not to give too much trouble to another woman. Only after the arrival of her first child or when the new born child is a male, a mother might recuperate a bit longer, because people give more importance to a male child and insist that his mother should take more rest.

Another important dimension which remains to be discussed is that of the various restrictions which are imposed on the activities of the mother and her new baby. A new born child must not be taken out of the home for forty days after his birth, because his hands and feet are believed to be crooked - za<sup>c</sup>far toxīnār. After parturition, the mother is considered polluted for forty days and most of her activities are circumscribed. Until her period of pollution is over, she should not go out of the house, for her blood is thought to be frozen and her body might become ridden with holes. She should also avoid eating



meat and drinking water for ten days - that is, until she performs the first ceremonial washing - heiz qusli. If she eats meat it is believed that her next baby will be born in the form of an animal which eats babies in the mother's womb - beča xor - and if she drinks water her womb will supperate and fail to hold her next babies firmly so that the mother will miscarry them.

Most of the restrictions placed on a woman while she is 'unclean' are associated with religious matters. She should not pray, enter the mosque or touch any kind of sacred things. During religious months (Moharram and Ramazān) and on occasions of other religious festivals when food are usually prepared blessed and distributed in the name of the Imams and for religious purposes or for the fulfilment of a vow, a polluted woman is not allowed to prepare or touch the food. She usually asks a relative or a close neighbour to prepare the food for her family. In Ramazān, when every muslim should not eat anything from sunrise to sunset, the fast of a woman who has given birth and is regarded polluted, is not counted and she has to compensate for it after her time of pollution comes to an end. Usually she makes up for the missed fasts on Fridays or other religious festivals. Any failure to consider these traditional rules properly is regarded as committing sin, because they are "the injunctions and laws of God".

Indeed, post-partum pollution is an Islamic conviction in respect of which specific injunctions are prescribed and restrictions are made on the women's activities; and any failure to observe the injunctions properly is threatened with punishment. In Islam, one is considered impure and polluted after the performance of bodily functions. These are divided into 'lesser impurities' and 'greater impurities'. Lesser or minor impurities include ordinary evacuations, vomiting and the discharge of blood from any part of the body. Both men and women are regarded as polluted as a result of these and the person in-

volved can be cleansed by wuzu, the partial washing prescribed before the daily recitation of prayers. The 'greater impurities' include such activities as bud<sup>c</sup>a - 'coitus' - in which case both men and women are considered polluted, nifās - 'puerperium' in which case a woman is believed to be unclean for a period of from 25-40 days, and haiz - 'menstruation' as the result of which a woman is thought to be unclean for a period varying from three to ten days. During this time she is not permitted to say her prayers, to read the Quran or even to touch it, or to go into the precincts of a mosque. The 'greater impurities' cannot be removed by wuzu, but by ḡosl - taking a thorough bath'.<sup>1</sup>

In Islam, then, apart from being considered unclean after childbirth a woman is also regarded as polluted and impure during her period of menstruation, during which time she should observe the same restrictions on her activities as a woman does after childbirth. Women in the village consider themselves extremely polluted after parturition and during their monthly cycle, referring to themselves as mīndār - 'dirty' and 'unclean' - or bāš yumāli - 'in need of a thorough washing'. In addition to being regarded as unclean and impure, menstruation is a matter of shame and embarrassment for a woman in Doniq. It should not be referred to openly. Except for her husband, no one should know that a woman is having her period. They feel ashamed about their 'unclean' condition, younger women prefer to ignore religious injunctions during periods of pollution rather than let them become known to older women. There is no special ceremony when a girl first menstruates and nothing is done to draw attention to the change of her physical condition. Some women said that they had menstruated in their parents' houses before going to their husband's households, but because

1. Bevan Jones, op. cit., pp. 282-83; and Godsiyeh Hejāzi, Arzeš-e zan yā zan az nazar-e qazāi va ejtemā'i (Tehran, n.d.), pp. 80-83.

they felt extremely ashamed and thus didn't want their mothers or other older female relatives to know about their position, they refused to wash themselves ceremonially and threw the soiled pads into the toilet. In fact discarding the soiled pads without washing the blood away, is regarded as a great sin in the eyes of the village women. If they are locally married, young daughters-in-law who live with their in-laws, perform their ablution during pollution in their fathers' houses in order not to let their condition be known to members of their husbands' families. However those who have married into the village from outside must ask for permission from the older women of the household to take a pan or whatever is needed to warm water and wash themselves ceremonially, although they feel extremely ashamed and embarrassed to have to do this. In Ramazān, even if the fast of a polluted woman is not counted, she does not interrupt her fast or her prayers, so that people will not notice her condition. Some women said that when they sometimes do have an opportunity to break their fast during pollution, they rub something onto their lips to make them look colourless and pale in order to mislead people about their situation. It is also considered shameful and immodest if a woman's menstruation pads are seen by anyone else. Women usually wash and dry them in secret - usually they are not dried in the open air, but in the oven. Villagers in Doniq follow Islamic teaching by avoiding sexual intercourse during pollution. Women often said that during the period of menstruation, their husbands prefer to separate their beds from them, and the women themselves also do not feel so much at ease sleeping with their husbands in the same bed.

In short, during menstruation and after childbirth women are considered polluted and because of this they face several restrictions and deprivations. Most women themselves believe deeply in the religious teachings and injunctions and carry them out as faithfully as possible for fear of punishment.

Looking at this aspect of Doniq society in general terms, it is noteworthy that while the children born of women are so much in demand and so highly valued, the very physical elements which produce the same valuable and crucial children, are considered 'dirty' and 'shameful'. Certainly, as some anthropological studies demonstrate this negative attitude towards reproductive processes leads to the devaluation and degradation of women and makes their trouble and effort during pregnancy and childbirth appears worthless. Societies or customs which regard women as polluted and dirty at certain times and therefore as inferior and degraded, have been the concern of some anthropological studies. For instance, Frank Young and Albert Bacdayan (1965) and Mary Douglas (1975) have come to the conclusion from the sample groups they have studied that menstrual and post-partum uncleanness is, indeed, typical of a "rigid" society where there is strong orthodox religion and authoritarian leadership, where there is a wide barrier rigidly adhered to between the worlds of men and women and where men are the dominant force in social organization. These scholars, particularly Douglas, notice that this sort of pollution, especially menstrual uncleanness is in effect an expression of male superiority, since it links women with dirt and uncleanness and widens the gap between the worlds of men and women, by limiting female involvement in matters dealt by men. Jean Allen, however in a 1977 study, looks at the subject from a different angle. She deals with the interconnection between ideology and methods of production, not just with symbolism and ideas. Although women play a vital part in reproduction (that is, in replenishing the workforce) and although they may also hold key functions in terms of productivity (that is, in terms of earning income of their families), in many types of society they have very little to say in the use of their bodies for reproduction or their hands for work. Allan puts forward the idea that menstrual "pollution" is found where men control women - no matter how important women may be to the life of the community. Women are taught to regard themselves as 'unclean'. There-



fore they accept the men as their rightful masters. And when women are degraded in this way, regarded as second-class human beings, and segregated from men, their essential roles in society are disguised and forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

The research and perspectives of these scholars are useful when one analyses the position of women in Doniq. The impurity associated with menstruation and childbirth, restricting women from joining in religious ceremonies and preventing them from prayer, fasting, entering the mosque and touching or reading the Quran besides separating them from their husbands' beds (whereas on ordinary days it is obligatory for them not to refuse to allow their husbands to have intercourse with them) all emphasize the inferiority of women and their separation from men and mask the importance of their roles in reproduction.

#### Upbringing and custody of children

Until the child is almost four years old, his or her care and training is the full and sole responsibility of women. Any help from a man in taking care of a child - help such as preparing food, changing nappies or generally looking after a child's needs is considered shameful for the man and is supposed to be damaging to his dignity.

Children are swaddled in several layers of cloth - balayh from the first day of birth till they are two years old. Old, cast off clothes, especially thick ones which do not show on the outside when soiled by the child, are used as nappies. It does not matter how a child feels inside his balayh as long as it does not look soiled. Because they have such a burdensome dom-

1. F.W. Young and Albert A. Bacdayan, "Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity", in Ethnology, IV (1965), pp. 225-40; M. Douglas, Implicit Meanings, (London, 1975), pp. 61-3; and J. Allan, "Menstrual Restrictions and Production and Reproduction", M.Sc. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 36-45.

estic routine and only a few clothes for their children, mothers cannot change the babies' balayh more than twice a day - once in early morning and again in late evening. As a result children may scream in discomfort for hours and the legs of most of them are badly affected by sores because they have to wear wet balayh for so long. But mothers treat the sores on the leg with mud scraped off the wall. Swaddling is believed to protect the baby's fragility, particularly when the baby is handed from one person to another, and to help children develop a good strong figure. Otherwise it is thought, the baby's legs and feet would grow crookedly and, especially when the child is male, his waist would be feeble so that he would be unable to perform heavy and hard work in future. Apart from the beliefs in regard to swaddling, on the whole (as might be inferred from the findings of Josephine Arasteh) since village life is relatively homogeneous and emphasizes group solidarity, village mothers adhere strongly to custom and are less inclined than their city counterparts to break away from the traditional child-rearing practices.<sup>1</sup> When my landlady tried to take initiative and stop swaddling her two month-old son, she was ridiculed by her relatives and neighbours who said she had become modern and did not want to bring her child up in the way her mother and grandmother had done.

When a child reaches about two years of age, his swaddling clothes are gradually removed as he is now toilet trained to some extent. His diet is almost exclusively milk for about two years or longer since there is a general scarcity of other suitable food in the village. In respect to feeding children mothers in Doniq are generally divided into three groups: 1) mothers who breast-feed; 2) mothers who both breast-feed and bottle feed because their own milk is not plentiful enough; 3) mothers who do not have milk at all and whose babies are totally bottle-fed. Comparisons show that the health of mothers and

1. Arasteh, op. cit., p. 181.

children in the first group is better than that in the other two groups. Children in the second and third groups tend to be weak and sickly and the mothers suffer considerably. These mothers encounter more problems than they might otherwise do because they know very little about bottle-feeding and also because of the lack of necessary supplies in the village. Usually the mothers feed babies with whatever milk is available - one day with dried milk and another day with the milk of different types of cattle. The milk is rarely boiled and it is always kept on a shelf in the house uncovered and exposed to dust, smoke and flies. In short, children are fed in a very unhygienic way and always suffer from poor health.

The weaning of children from their mothers' breast depends totally on the next pregnancy of their mothers. Some mothers normally get pregnant again after one to two years and thus wean their children when they are one to two years old. Some others conceive at very short intervals (three to four months after the birth of a child). These women then bottle-feed their babies until the next infant is born and after the birth of this new baby they wean the older baby. Finally with some other women, pregnancy depends on when they wean their breast-fed children. In this group women might either continue to breast-feed for longer periods (three to four years) in order to benefit from the contraceptive effect of doing so, or wean children earlier than normal in order to get pregnant earlier. On the whole, the age at which mothers tend to wean their children is one to two years. To wean the children a mother normally puts a bitter substance, such as pepper or turmeric on her nipples or rubs a black article like coal on them, or she may stick some black hair mixed with tar on her breasts to frighten the child.

Lack of medical services in the village and the high child mortality rate prompt mothers constantly to demonstrate protective attitudes towards their children. While she may bear a large

number of children, the village mother sees many of them die in infancy (see Chapter 1, p.19). Therefore, she does everything she can for their well-being. The most common afflictions of children are enteric and respiratory diseases and from infancy on, there is also the danger of eye infection, and trachoma and skin diseases caused by lack of bodily cleanliness. Childrens' illnesses may be ascribed to natural causes, but village people also attribute childhood sickness, especially in small children, to the interference of evil spirits who have a special enthusiasm for attacking very young children. Consequently mothers often try to safeguard the health of their children by the use of numerous charms, amulets prepared by the village mullā, herbal medicines - Turka dāvā - and magical cures. Generally speaking, these medicines and magical cures are almost entirely practised on boy children. When a boy falls ill, his mother tries out on him all herbal medicines and magical remedies. If the treatment is not efficacious, the parents refer to the town doctor. When a boy is seven days old, his whole body is pricked with a razor, this being done either by his mother or by the village midwife. It is believed that every child suffers bājālā - 'dark blue abscess'—which is caused by sucking dirty blood in his mother's womb, and this will kill him if it is not drained out. Women reported that bājālā has killed many children in the village, but that so far only one or two children have been killed because of incorrect pricking and excessive bleeding.

When a boy is restless, screams and does not sleep properly, it is said that his birth washing ceremony has not been performed properly - qīrxī čixmīyib. Forty spoonfuls of cold water are sprinkled over the baby while he is asleep; or a piece of his shirt is cut off - nišāna tutmāx and mixed with a piece of coal, some salt and bread, and the mixture is given to a dog to eat after being kept for one night at the bedside of the child. Or it is believed that when a child is restless, the roof of his mouth has come down - dāmāgi sālānīp and the mother



thrusts her finger firmly into his mouth to push the roof up.

If a child does not walk or speak within the time expected, čilla - a spirit is thought to surround the child. Čilla is said to surround a child if he is not taken out to the street immediately after a corpse has been carried to the cemetery, passing in front of his house. The čilla may also take hold of the child if two mothers who have given birth on the same day, speak to each other before their post-partum pollution is over. To exorcise this čilla, zay - 'alum' - is dissolved in water and is poured over the baby. If a boy is suffering from ear-ache, cigarette smoke is puffed up into his ears or melted butter or black oil are poured into the ear. When skin diseases and ulcers occur, the child is made to eat godix mozālāxi - a foal's excrement - or sičān fazlasi - a mouse's faeces. In the case of the child's having a fever, some dough is rubbed onto his back and for tummy ache, the child is held above his father's head and turned around three times. Finally when the child's throat is sore or swollen, an ailment which is called xirnayh in the local dialect, he is made to drink the urine of a little boy. If this does not help, his head is pricked.

Usually the diseases children suffer are believed to be caused by the evil-eye - göz. Göz was often blamed for making children restless or ill and for frightening and even killing them. To ward off the evil-eye from children, three prayers are written by a prayer writer. One is soaked in water and is fed to the baby; another is burned in the fire along with the hair of a cat and some wild rue and the child is turned around over the smoke; and one is pinned to the child's clothing or sometimes it is given to him to swallow. It can be easily understood that the high mortality rate among children, as the consequence of infectious diseases such as measles, dysentery, whooping cough, smallpox, diphtheria and typhoid, against which children are rarely vaccinated, or of malnutrition both during the mother's pregnancy and after childbirth, and of

poor sanitation and medical services and general poverty, prompt the village mothers to appeal to religious, supernatural and superstitious practices to protect their children's well-being. These medicines are not usually tried on girls until they are five or six. If a baby girl falls ill, the parents prefer to let her die, rather than to resort to many different possible remedies. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the child being the only girl in a family with many sons, are some of these cures sought for a girl below the age of five.

In any case, until children of either sex arrive at four, their fathers hardly show any interest in them, though after the children are toilet trained, they might sometimes take little boys to the village shop or for a turn around the village. Both boys and girls are under the sole direction and training of their mothers until the age of four or five. The mothers treat children very permissively, although occasionally they do have recourse to the help of the fathers, whose authoritative relationship with their offspring is more conducive to discipline than the mother's own attitude. 'Your father will beat you' a mother sometimes says when she is 'at the end of her tether' in handling a discipline problem. At the age of four or five, although they are still constantly in or around the house, little boys are entrusted to the older male members of the household for their education and training. During non-working hours boys amuse themselves making bread with their mothers, cook themselves the scraps of food which they may happen to pick up and play games with both boys and girls among the neighbour's children. In working hours, when older male relatives tend animals inside the house or herd them out of doors or work in the fields, little boys accompany them and gradually learn about herding and agricultural affairs. By six or seven, little boys have themselves become good shepherds for their families and spend most of the day away from the home herding the sheep or lambs, returning to the house in the evening. Af-

ter seven, they attend school and outside school hours and during school holidays, they are always busy either inside or outside the home doing herding and agricultural work. As regards moral and religious up-bringing, only a little teaching is given to them formally at school or by their families. Almost everything they learn is picked up by observation, by listening to their elders discussing various topics, and by following their example. However, at Ramazān and Moharram when a mullā comes to the village, the boys do attend formal lectures on religion and morals.

For little girls, however, up-bringing is quite different. Very few girls have the chance to attend school for even two or three years. Girls spend most of their time at home with their mothers and are instructed and educated by their mothers and other older female relatives. Just as fathers have more control over the training and disciplining of boys, mothers exercise more control over the up-bringing of girls. Although mothers are extremely devoted to their sons and express a preference for boy children, once girl children are born and grow up, mothers seem to identify more with their daughters than with their sons. The close tie between mother and daughter, as Nancy Chodorow notes, is based, not simply on mutual over-involvement, but often on mutual understanding of their position and oppression.<sup>1</sup> Mothers I talked to said that although they have to be serious and severe with girl children in order to train them in such a way as to fit properly and adequately for marriage, nevertheless they always make an effort to avoid physical reprimands whenever possible, because they feel sympathy with the girls who will eventually have to leave home and live in the very harsh company of their husband's relatives after they marry. However, while a mother tends to spoil her growing son, she imposes stricter demands on her daugh-

1. N. Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality", in Lamphere and Rosaldo (eds.) *op. cit.*, pp. 43-66.

ter, for she recognizes the importance of training her properly to be a good wife. Although boys often disregard orders their mothers give them, girls must obey their mother's instructions implicitly. Early on in life girls begin to learn domestic tasks so that by the time they are married they have become capable of performing all the domestic duties required of a married woman. After they reach five years of age, girls' games and playing are almost entirely stopped and they are required to concentrate on hard work around the house so that they will build up as much experience as possible and get used to the hard work expected from them in their husbands' households. Their favourite game is to take care of little children, or to do washing at the river with other girls or compete with neighbourhood girls in carpet weaving.

#### Women's control over fertility

One last dimension of women's life which remains to be touched on in this chapter is the control women exert over their own reproductive capacities and their reproduction.

It has been noted in previous pages that women in the village compete with each other in producing children, envy and begrudge a woman who gives birth to many children, or who conceives at short intervals or whose family suffers less infant mortality than theirs, but this comment should not obscure the fact that they bitterly resent their frequent pregnancies and the need to bring up many children successively. In Doniq, contraception is hardly practised at all and a woman may therefore have children ranging in age from twenty down to three. Consequently she always has children around her, requiring her attention and care.

The majority of women I talked to, women irrespective of age expressed long-standing complaints about how tired they were of conceiving so frequently and of bringing up so many child-



ren. Some women complained that nobody, not even their own husbands, understand their suffering in the village - how they give birth to large numbers of children and have to bring them up in a society like the village which lacks every modern amenity. Some others complained that children had ruined their lives. They had been thrown into marriage and had started having children at a very early age so that when they were still under thirty they found themselves surrounded by many children who had destroyed their youth and vitality. They said that bearing and rearing many children made them tired of life and aged them very soon, but they had to accept willingly whatever lot in life they were apportioned by God. An informant gave a very good description of the situation of village women in relation to child bearing.

""Women in the village are like a car", she said, "whose control is in the hands of its owner. The driver knows when and where to drive or stop it."

In other words, women lack control over their own reproductive capacities, but the elements which restrict their freedom to make decisions, are not only limited to the power of their husbands', but to various cultural, social and economic forces which also have a bearing on them. The only contraceptive device which is known to the village women is the pill, which was introduced to them ten years ago. The census I have taken about the women who have used or are using contraceptives indicates that only a very few women in a special group have used or use it, and that they did so, or do so only for very short periods. The women using the pill as a means to prevent pregnancy are themselves divided into two categories. Firstly, a few middle-aged women who fall seriously ill during pregnancy, whose labour is difficult and dangerous and on whom a lot of money is spent when they give birth. These women use the pill or some other means of contraception because the doctor orders them to do so and their husband gives his permission.

Of course, it should be borne in mind that women in this group have at least six or seven children. Otherwise, they would not be allowed to use contraceptives. There are many women in the same position as regards health, but since they have fewer children, they are never permitted to use contraceptives. The second category is also made up of a few middle-aged women. But these are the women who have given birth to many children and at the present time they have more than eight or even 12 children. These women use contraception for a very short time, perhaps from six to fifteen months, to ensure spaces between their children. It should be noted of the women of this second group that they use contraceptives secretly, without informing their husbands or receiving their permission, otherwise their husbands would object and would forbid them to interfere with nature in this way.

The division between the two groups however, demonstrates that contraception is not much used by women in Doniq. While the majority of women interviewed appeared to think it would be marvellous to limit the frequency of their pregnancies in any way possible, they simply could not do so. Many reasons were given by women for their inability to use contraceptives. One of the important factors which makes women powerless to control their fertility is, as has been discussed earlier, the importance of and indeed vital position of children in the social, political and economic status of the families and the notable effectiveness of their fecundity on the social status of women themselves. Indeed, the conclusions of some recent studies on developing countries demonstrate that in labour-intensive peasant economies there is always strong resistance to birth control programmes. Researchers' findings indicate that in a social system where children are used as manpower to protect families against attacks on themselves and their property and more importantly where children form the chief family resources and investment, the number of children determines the relative wealth of families - i.e. the more babies a woman produces the

more workers there will eventually be in the family; and in a rural society based on labour-intensive economy, this means more accumulated wealth and the security it brings. Therefore the natalist family strategy will resist any programme aimed at birth control.<sup>1</sup> Thus, where the wealth of a family grows with the size of its children, through whom a mother also gains rights which were denied to her before, she is compelled to add to their number, even if she is unwilling to do so.

The second force which seems to be an even stronger deterrent to the use of birth control is the body of religious ideas of women themselves and of their husbands. Children are believed to be tokens of God's mercy - Allāh barakati - and it is for every woman to accept cheerfully whatever pāy - 'share' - God grants her. Any effort to hinder the distribution of mercy will be cursed by God. Hindering the working out of God's will and mercy is taken as blasphemy and the person involved is guilty of ingratitude.<sup>2</sup> Therefore some women themselves were loyal to the belief and were not only afraid to use contraceptives, but were also afraid even to mention out loud the very topic repudiating God's mercy lest such words be regarded as blasphemy. These women were completely passive about their fertility and left it to God to make this decision. Of course, they would have liked the number of their children to be limited, but waited for God to decide when this limit had been reached. "It is in the hands of God. Whenever he deems it expedient, he will withdraw his share from me and give me some rest", was the view often repeated by these women. In contrast to this group there are also some women who, although they held the same beliefs, rebelled against their beliefs in deciding to use

1. See Dr. A. Momeni, The Population of Iran: A Dynamic Analysis, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Texas University, 1970), pp. 122-23; and Dillion, op. cit., pp. 17-18 and 372-73.

2. Cf. P. Vielle, "Birth and Death in an Islamic Society", in Diogenes, 57 (1967), pp. 101-27; N.H. Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns of Muslim Women", in Beck and Keddie (eds.), op. cit., pp. 69-99; and J. Behnam, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

birth control. However these women were prevented from using contraception by their husbands because of their religious beliefs. Most women in this group said that they had managed to obtain the pill somehow or other and were using it, but their husbands found out about their plans and destroyed the pills, angry at the women for being concerned and worried about the number of children they had. Men are responsible for the childrens' maintenance, the men argued, and so they should worry rather than the women. On the other hand, the men should not have to worry either because "He who gives the tooth gives the bread", or "when a child is born, he brings with him his maintenance".

The third factor affecting women's decisions about their fertility is the non-availability of birth control devices in the village and lack of knowledge about how to use the pill. Contraceptives are distributed by the public clinic in the town and so it is very difficult and sometimes impossible for village women to obtain the pill, especially when their husbands are not willing for them to use birth control and thus do not cooperate with them. For women who live in pardah, it is not possible to go to the town by themselves. They are usually accompanied by their husbands in front of whom they cannot go to the clinic and obtain birth control pills. Consequently those women categorized as a second group of contraceptive users, who practise birth control without informing their husbands or receiving their permission, usually give money to their older female relatives, who may sometimes go to the town without being accompanied by their menfolk and ask them to purchase the pill for them from a drugstore.<sup>1</sup> Often the same woman who helps the

1. While this act is normally considered shameful, and embarrassing with respect to the fact that younger women should not speak about sexuality at all in the presence of older women, nevertheless, in desperation, young women turn to older relatives to give them help. On the other hand, the women who seek contraceptives are usually over forty years of age and have given birth to many children. Consequently, the hierarchical relationship between them and their older relatives has been to some extent relaxed.



village women during pregnancy who, as I mentioned earlier, buys and collects things for the pregnant women from the village shop or the town, also helps women to obtain contraceptives from the town clinic or from drugstores. However, this policy did not seem to be altogether successful. More often than not a woman cannot obtain the pill, either because of lack of money or because she cannot find any way of making contact with the city. As a result she runs into severe difficulties. I asked one woman who had given birth to 14 children of whom eight survived and six were dead, whether she would like to have any more babies. She answered,

"No, I am sick and tired of pregnancy and of bearing children. How many must I have?"

She thrust her hand into her pocket and brought out a birth control ampoule and continued,

"I used to use the pill for a while, but I couldn't manage it. One month I couldn't get anyone to buy it for me and I had been bleeding for a long time. So a few days ago when my husband had taken me into town and had given me permission to stay for a few days with my brother's family there, I asked my brother's wife to get something for me which is easier to use, and she got this ampoule. This should be injected every three months. I made a great mistake not getting it injected when I was in the town. Now I have to wait until I can go to the town again on some excuse.. My husband doesn't know anything about all this. He says using any sort of birth control is a sin and against God's will. Of course, he doesn't know how much trouble I have in pregnancy and in giving birth and bringing children up. He only sees 'the finished article', so to speak - children sitting around the oven. If I had the choice, I would not have borne more than five children, but I have no alternative..."

In fact, two months after this account of the woman's grievances, when I saw her again, she said that she had not managed to get the ampoule injected and was pregnant again.

Even if women do manage to obtain birth control devices by some means or other, they are completely ignorant about how to use them, because they are illiterate and there is no one to help them. I came across some women who said that they had tried to use the pill for a short while, but since it was not pleasant and effective, they stopped using it. They used to use it in the order of one pill every four or five nights and they used to feel sick, bleed or get pregnant while using it. I was able to ask the viewpoint of a man whose wife would have liked very much to start using contraceptives, but who did not allow her to do so. He said,

"First of all, this is a village and we need a lot of hands to do our work. If our work was managed in an organized way, for instance, if agriculture was mechanized so that we did not need many sons to do husbandry or to help on the land (which needs a big labour force) we wouldn't force our wives to produce as many children as they can. In the second place, I swear by God, if there was someone to help and teach women how to use contraception, I personally would allow my wife to control the number of her pregnancies and wouldn't want to have more than seven or eight children. But you see women here in the village are ignorant and don't know anything about the pill. For instance, they use it while they are pregnant and do a lot of harm either to the baby or themselves..."

In any case, lack of opportunities to buy birth control preparations and lack of knowledge about contraceptive methods seems to be another factor deterring women from controlling the birth rate.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the high rate of child mortality and the frequent miscarriages which women suffer are forces which also encourage women to conceive more often in order to replace those babies that have died. Ironically the high rate of mortality is associated with the high rate of procreation which women

1. See Richard Moore, "Population and Family Planning in Iran", in Middle East Journal, 28 (1974), pp. 396-408.

have to keep up. However, all the reasons given by the village women for not using birth control, clarify their expression that says, 'a woman in the village is like a car whose direction and control is in the hands of its driver'. The women mean by 'driver' not only their husbands' power, but the dynamics of the whole complex social and economic system which controls their decisions over their reproductive capacities.

In the end, although women have primary responsibility and play vital roles in both biological reproduction and in the rearing of children, they have no rights over their children in the case of divorce or the death of their husbands. Islamic law gives a woman who is widowed or divorced the right to custody of her children for a limited period of time only and when that period comes to an end the children are automatically handed over to their father or to the nearest male relative on the father's side. According to Shi'ite law (Ithna 'Ashari) a mother has a legal claim to the custody of her sons only until they reach two years of age (which is the usual age for weaning) though she may keep her daughters until they are seven years old. While the child is in the custody of its mother, however, the father or his nearest male relative is its legal guardian. As such, he may make what arrangements he wishes for the child's education and may also draw up a marriage contract for the child without the consent of the mother. Even the mother's right to her short period of custody is not absolute. She may have to give up her right not only if she becomes unfit on moral grounds or through ill-health to look after the child, but also if she remarries even to a man in the same lineage as the child.<sup>1</sup>

People in the village, even the women themselves, believed that mothers are only responsible for bringing up the children and

1. Quran, 2:233; Levy, The Social Structure of Islam..., op. cit., pp. 139-40; Fyze op. cit., pp. 171-80; Bevan Jones, op. cit., pp. 236-8; and Coulson and Hinchcliffe, op. cit., pp. 44-5.

cannot have any legal rights over them. Children belong to fathers because they beget them and they spring from their fathers' loins. It is said that "a father is able to beget hundreds of thousands of children in one minute, whereas a mother is unable to generate one." Therefore, women believed that in the case of divorce, a father has the right to claim children from their mothers at any time, even if they are not weaned, but that normally it is reasonable to delay claiming children until after they are weaned. In the case of the death of a father, although a mother might be asked to look after his children as long as she is not remarried, she may not make any decision in matter related to the child. One of the child's nearest male relatives, usually his uncle or one of his paternal cousins becomes his guardian. As soon as a widowed mother remarries, the custody of her children even of those not weaned, passes to the male relatives of her first husband. She cannot take them to her second husband's house, unless her first husband had no close male relatives who can support his children. Safura (26 years of age), to take one example, had been widowed for four years and wanted to remarry. She had three children, two sons and a daughter, and very much wanted to take her youngest child (a boy of three) to her own home. However her first husband's brother did not allow her to do this and claimed the custody of all three children along with their inheritances.

In short, what I have tried to concentrate on in this chapter, is the fact that unless a woman gives proof of her fertility, she is at the bottom of the domestic and societal pecking order, so to speak, she is not thought of as a proper member of her husband's household and has no right to consider herself settled happily in her married life. Barrenness is believed to be a woman's fault and a childless woman is teased, maltreated and accused of evil acts. Then again, the sex of a woman's children is particularly important to her social status. By both men and women girls are regarded as burdens and as



liabilities and are not welcomed at birth. Therefore, a woman who gives birth only to female children or bears several girl children in a row, meets with the same fate as a barren woman. She is mal-treated by her husband and blamed by women themselves and even by herself.

Moreover, although Doniq women play vital roles by going through a great deal of suffering in bearing and bringing up the children who are of such immense social and economic importance to their husbands' families, their pregnancies and their biological make up are matters of shame and embarrassment and restrict their activities considerably. During pregnancy, they are not specially provided for and after childbirth and during the monthly cycle they are considered polluted and degraded and must therefore be separated from the men and their world. They have very little access to contraception and generally exert minimal control over the decisions related to their own reproductive capacity. As a final irony, should they be divorced or widowed, their offspring, especially their sons, are not even theirs by legal right.

## CHAPTER 6

### CARPET MANUFACTURE

The previous chapters have been mainly concerned with the traditional work which women have to do. It has been demonstrated that women are almost entirely shut out of public society and from the men's world and are limited to their traditional domain, home, where they are economically dependent on their men and are engaged in housework which is considered 'non-work' and economically unimportant, and in childbearing and rearing over which they exert little control. But in recent years, women have been compelled to add to their domestic routines a new job - 'carpet manufacture', which has been introduced to the village recently and which has been of immense social and economic importance. The central role in the carpet industry is played by women. Therefore it is important to consider what effects the recent economic development in which women have been playing crucial roles, could have on the status of women.

#### History of carpet industry in Iran

The scarcity of sources has made it impossible to give a comprehensive detailed survey of the history and, in particular, organization of carpet weaving in Iran which would take into consideration the situation of weavers in Doniq. The existing materials are mostly early works associated with the technique and design of carpets rather than with the way the carpet industry is organized and the product marketed throughout the country. There is even no accurate information available about the number of firms, workshops or looms that exist in the country today, nor about how many and of what sex are the

workers engaged in weaving, about how much they are paid or about their conditions of work. Thus, I was able to gather only very limited and brief data about carpet manufacture which is one of the most important and most ancient handicrafts in Iran.

One of the most ancient traditions among the arts and crafts of Persia is the production of carpets. As early as the seventeenth century these carpets had achieved international fame and were much sought after. However it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that carpet weaving became a commercial industry, organized to meet the needs of the export trade.<sup>1</sup> Before this, carpet weaving in Iran was a normal household chore for women who were mostly of tribal origin, either pastoral nomads or village women from settled tribes. The carpets they produced were either used by the makers' own families - in which case they became valuable additions to the household inventory - or they were sold in nearby towns or villages for local domestic use. Carpets produced by tribal weavers were normally woven on a horizontal loom. This is still the practice of most tribal weavers. The strands were tied with a Turkish knot and worked into geometric designs memorized by the weavers. Warps and wefts were of wool produced locally, and both spun and dyed by the weavers themselves. The finished carpets are long and narrow in shape and usually less densely knotted than carpets made in the city.

1. One of a limited number of books on Persian carpets which includes valuable material on the socio-economic aspects of the craft is the book by A.C. Edwards, which was published in 1953 soon after he died. For most of his life Edwards himself was a carpet dealer. He spoke Persian and undertook extensive travels in Persia. He was personally acquainted with the European pioneers in the trade, so that with his knowledge he was able to form a bridge between the earliest phases of the industry and the industry as it is in the 20th century; A.C. Edwards, The Persian Carpet, (London, 1953); see also K. Erdmann, Oriental Carpets, translated from German by Charles Grant Ellis (London, 1960), pp. 33-45; H. Walff, The Traditional Crafts of Persia, (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 177-222; F. Fabbri, Oriental Carpets, translated from the Italian original by A. Hartcup, (London, 1969), pp. 36-74; and Dillion, op. cit., pp. 281-311.

There is also another tradition of weaving called 'city weaving' which is of more recent development than the tribal craft and has been refined to a higher degree of specialization. In the past city carpets were usually woven by male experts and master weavers to commissions from wealthy patrons among the royalty or nobility. This kind of fine carpet was not used by the producers themselves; it was a luxury item for the upper classes, as is still usually the case in Iran. The designs of city carpets are more creative than those of the tribal carpets, and in fact city carpet weaving is really a fine art tradition rather than a traditional craft. The various tasks of designing the carpet, dying the wool and spinning and weaving it are refined to such a degree that each is carried out by a separate specialist. Cotton is commonly used for the warp of the carpet rather than wool, and there is a greater density of weave than is to be seen in tribal weaving. The looms are upright and roller beams and other mechanized elements make provision for the manufacture of carpets of greater size than rural weavers can produce.<sup>1</sup>

About the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Persian carpets began to be seen for sale commercially on the western market. Most of the carpets which had reached the west prior to the development of commercial carpet manufacture in Iran were of tribal kinds made by nomadic tribal people for their own immediate use and were therefore second-hand carpets. As Edwards notes, these carpets only appeared on the market because they were used throughout Iranian society as important items of investment. Since there were no banks in Persia, it was the custom in the nineteenth century (as it still is) for people to invest in carpets as a form of savings. In times of need the carpets could be sold for cash - always at a profit if those selling them had owned them for forty years or even ten years. Western buyers wanted to purchase old carpets and

1. Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-8; cf. Dillion, *op. cit.*, p. 283.



were happy to pay more for them than for new carpets. As a result every bazaar in Persia, displayed a steady succession of antique or semi-antique carpets which people brought from their homes. Indeed these older carpets reached the market in the first place because people recognized that they would bring a much-needed boost to their family income. If a tribal family were in financial distress, various household goods might have to be relinquished to meet the urgent need for funds. Carpets were among the possessions parted with under these circumstances. Trading was under the control of dealers from Tabriz who were chiefly concerned with importing manufactured goods from Europe. They had branch offices of their business in Istanbul and they also retained agents in all the important Persian cities. Their handling of carpets grew out of what was at first just a profitable sideline. In the Iranian towns the merchants' agents bought such carpets as might make their way to the bazaar and shipped them to Tabriz by caravan, from Tabriz they were sent on to Istanbul where European traders could buy them. The international carpet trade began to centre around Istanbul and to prosper there.<sup>1</sup>

As Tabrizi merchants worked to meet the growing European desire for Persian carpets, the available supply of antique and semi-antique carpets quickly dwindled. Anxious to continue to meet demands (which had led to considerable profits) the merchants in Tabriz now set about organizing the production of new carpets for the trade. These were to be woven specially for export, in various sizes and colours which the dealers considered suited to western trade. The commercial carpet industry got under way, therefore, as a means of stocking the international market, in the 1880's. From being an item worked by craftsmen or women to meet a limited home requirement, the Persian carpet had now evolved into an article largely made for export. As such it sported new patterns and colours and a wider var-

1. Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-6; Dillion, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

iety of sizes. It was in demand all over the world. By now the merchants of Tabriz were very ambitious. They were not content simply to place orders with the village weavers. They soon established factories with several looms each - first in Tabriz, and later in Mashad, Kirman and Kashan. Apart from establishing town workshops, they began to employ 'outworkers' under a system which they organized in several village areas - in the Heriz district east of Tabriz itself and also in the hundreds of villages to the east of Sultanabad.<sup>1</sup>

Soon European companies also entered the carpet industry. They entered into competition with and even ousted the Tabriz merchants in some areas. First among the Europeans to invade the carpet business in Iran was the Anglo-Swiss firm of Ziegler and Co. This company was based in Manchester, and exported cotton goods to Iran. Its representatives had a great deal of trouble bringing the firm's profits out of Persia. In an effort to avoid building up Persian currency, the company bought Russian gold coins (then in wide use all over north-west Persia) and carried out banking transactions in Petersburg. This proved to be an awkward arrangement and one of Ziegler's agents in Persia - a German named Oscar Strauss, made the suggestion that the firm might profitably use its funds to buy carpets in Sultānābād (Arāk) and these carpets could then be converted into money in England. In this way the European interest in the new industry took hold.<sup>2</sup> Like the Tabriz dealers before them Ziegler and Co. did not rely on the supply of carpets reaching the town Bazaar; they themselves set up contracts for the manufacture of new carpets. Production was first centred in and around Sultānābād (Arāk). Ziegler and Co. built a large compound with offices, staff residences, dye workshops and storage facilities and farmed out carpet orders with

1. Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.

2. *Ibid*, pp. 135-6.

weavers who worked at looms in their own homes. The weavers were supplied in advance with pre-dyed wool and with cartoons for the desired patterns. Wages for the workers were also set in advance. Trade grew quickly. By the turn of the century Zieglers had control of work produced on about 2,500 looms in the Arāk region.<sup>1</sup>

During the first decade of the present century other European and American companies arrived to set up business in Sultānābād, Kirman and other parts of Iran. However the carpet business in Iran received an enormous setback when the First World War broke out. Production ceased in most areas - Kirman, Arāk and the north-west of Iran because money was not forthcoming from the European carpet agents. Hundreds of people were made redundant. The economy of Europe was shattered by the war and during the war years there was no American market for Persian carpets - a disastrous situation since the carpet industry was now the most lucrative and important work provided in the country.<sup>2</sup>

When war ended, companies (both domestic and foreign) re-emerged, and the trade even attracted new agents and merchant companies. America now led the market for carpets, especially those from Kirman. The carpet industry continued to grow. In 1929 it was estimated that there were about 5000 looms in Kirman which was one of the most important centres of carpet production. By this time the Tabrizi contractors had almost entirely given way in face of European capital. During the following decade the industry was once more at a standstill - this time because of the depression in America and Europe. Realizing that the economic crisis was going to be a long-term depression, the American and European firms simply "struck camp" and went away.<sup>3</sup> A few years later when the world economy began

1. Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6; cf. Dillion, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

2. *Ibid*, pp. 291-92.

3. *Ibid*, p. 202.

to return to health, local businessmen took control of the Persian carpet industry. European companies came back to Iran, but this time as buyers rather than contractors. Edwards attributes this changed state of affairs to the growth of the Persian nationalist movement and the concomitant decline in the authority and prestige of American and European firms. When they first established themselves in Iran the European companies were encouraged by the dying Qājār monarchy by being given various privileges including "capitulary" powers allowing them to enforce the completion of contract work. As Edwards points out,

"It was the common practice thirty-five years ago (i.e. 1913) to lock a defaulting weaver in the stable - until his relatives came forward with guarantees that his carpet would be finished or the advance refunded. This was a rough-and-ready technique; but on the whole it worked satisfactorily for all concerned - including the weaver, who preferred it to the attentions of the local authorities of those days."<sup>1</sup>

After the alteration of the situation, the Europeans and American business did not see it advisable to pay capital advances to poverty-stricken weavers who might be tempted to pocket the money and disappear. As a result most of the firms decided not to return to Iran. Even the most important and the largest of the western companies, which had maintained its offices in Persia during the depression, accepted a take-over bid from a new company, organized and financed by the Persian government. Local business interests adopted the rest of the market and its supplies.<sup>2</sup> The abandoned looms and installations were mostly taken over by local businesses and the carpet industry in most regions expanded and still continues to grow. Since the Second World War in fact the carpet industry in Iran has undergone

1. Edwards, op. cit., p. 136.

2. Ibid, pp. 202-3.



major expansion. In 1973 the world wide recession and the escalation of oil prices and all the economic troubles which came with that crisis caused a slump in carpet production.<sup>1</sup> However the slump appears to have lasted only a short time. The demand for carpets in Europe and America does not seem to be declining. In fact the present unsettled economic conditions seem to be encouraging the upper-middle and upper classes to buy carpets as a form of speculation.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years the growth of the carpet industry has been a rural phenomenon. Workshops and looms in the major cities have become fewer in number, while those in village areas and small towns have multiplied. This can be partly explained by the fact that the law requires employers to pay welfare contributions for their workers and that there is a statute forbidding the employment of children under twelve (a law largely disregarded, however, even in the cities). It should also be remembered that carpets have declined in profitability as compared with other investments and this in itself has brought about a huge fall in the number of large workshops and a reversion to the "out-work" system by which village women and girls are mainly employed because their labour is cheapest.<sup>3</sup> There are a few factories located in and around Kirman (an important centre of Persia) where large carpet firms employ labourers paid on a piece-rate system. These companies normally hire overseers, designers and specially skilled weavers who receive higher wages than ordinary and semi-skilled workers. However, most carpets are now produced in private homes in small towns and especially in the villages, the work being carried out on a contract basis or "farmed out", although there are also some weavers who produce independently with their own capital weavers who work outwith the contract system usually make inexpen-

1. Quoted from Iran Almanac 1974 by Dillion, op. cit., p. 298.

2. Ibid, p. 298.

3. Beck and Keddie, "Introduction", in Beck and Keddie (eds.), op. cit., p. 6.

sive carpets of the tribal kind which require a relatively short time for production and less capital than more sophisticated carpets. A city-made carpet may take up to six months of a weaver's time, with his family involved in the work too. Specialists must be employed to dye the wool and design the pattern, and a large capital outlay is needed for the wool. These expenses are beyond the resources of independent weavers and so "city" carpets are produced under the "putting out" system. Under this system, carpet contractors - individual merchants and corporate firms - contact weavers directly or hire them via middle men. They supply the weavers with looms, raw materials and the desired designs and the weaver works at home. The contractor claims the finished carpet.<sup>1</sup> The workers in this industry all receive piece-work wages. Factory and other hired weavers receive payment in units of sad (100) nišan. Each nišan is a 160 knot length of carpet measured by the rows of knots which form part of the weft (puḍ) of the carpet. This 1,6000 knots constitutes in theory the piece of work carried out in a day although there are actually few weavers who complete as much as this in one day. The unit of payment for an "outworker" is the gaz, which is equal to 1230 nišan. The rate of pay per unit is proportionate to the complexity of the pattern, the closeness of the weave, and the type of knotting which is specified in the contract. The more time-consuming the operations asked for, the higher the weaver's wages are expected to be.<sup>2</sup>

According to the 1972 census, 72 per cent of carpet weaving employment is to be found in the rural areas of Iran, though the census gives a rather low figure since it does not take into account all the women who are not in the direct employment of someone and who weave for their own families. The main labour force in the carpet industry in villages has been formed of women and children.<sup>3</sup> Thus, women in the villages of Iran must

1. Edwards, op. cit., p. 206; Dillion, op. cit., pp. 304-10; and Beck and Keddie, "Introduction...", op. cit., p.6.

2. Dillion, op. cit., pp. 310-11.

3. Employment and Income Policies for Iran, (International Labour Office, 1973), p.47.

take on not only the roles of mother and housewife, performing their routine domestic chores under the most primitive conditions, and often working shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk in the field, but also the jobs of carpet weavers who weave regularly either as contract workers or as unpaid family labourers to supplement the income of their families. Of course, women in most rural areas of Iran (but not in Doniq) have never been "merely" housewives, because they have always worked in the fields and in fact the major portion of agricultural work is usually performed by them. The economic development and recent changes in Iran have not changed the pattern, but have intensified it by introducing the carpet industry and other new jobs into these areas where they have not been established before. Doniq is one of those areas, as will be noted later. In some villages, the rising incomes which farmers enjoy might possibly allow them to let their wives give up weaving or doing field labour, since they can now afford to hire wage labourers. However there has been only a slight drop in women's participation in farm work and weaving due to the advance of the capitalist economy into the rural communities.'

Generally speaking, while the carpet industry is one of enormous importance to the economic health of the whole country and also constitutes an important part of the rural economy, its workers are the most downtrodden in the industrial labour force. Receiving extremely low wages or no payment at all, they are highly dependent on middle men who hire them and give them credit by advancing payment for the product; weavers work in dreadful conditions - dark, damp and unhealthy rooms; they have no advantages such as social security pensions, holidays or maternity insurance and their menfolk take control of their finished products and the profits gained from their sale. Most weavers are illiterate - 90 per cent of them

1. Sedghi and Ashraf, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-15; cf. Halliday, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-92.

according to official national statistics of 1972<sup>1</sup> - all of which goes to reinforce the belief that women form a huge reserve of unskilled and cheap labour within the Iranian economy.

Under the Labour Law of 1949 the first attempt to regulate employment conditions and employer-employee relations under the law, children below the age of 10 or 12 must not be hired for labour. However the law does not work very well, particularly in regard to private industry and to various other types of employment - in agriculture, for instance, and in handicrafts and cottage industries, and also in work in the street and domestic service.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of thousands of children under 10 years of age, especially girls, work in the carpet industry and other crafts in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

#### History and organization of carpet manufacture in Doniq

As noted in Chapter 1, carpet weaving was not a traditional industry in Doniq. It was completely unknown in the village 25 or 30 years ago when Xānimnana - a women from Ardahā, a neighbouring village where carpet weaving was customary - married a man from Doniq. She set up a loom and taught a few neighbours and relatives how to weave carpets. But carpet manufacture did not expand in Doniq owing to the economic pressure faced by families. According to the National Census, in 1966 there were only 16 looms in Doniq.<sup>4</sup> Those women who wove mostly made kilim - a 'rough peasant rug' - which was used locally or occasionally sold in the neighbouring villages or in

1. Employment and Income Policy..., op. cit., p. 47.

2. Ibid, p. 87; and Bharier, op. cit., p. 36.

3. Keddie, Iran: Religion, Politics and..., op. cit., p. 156. Similar conditions were observed in Morocco's industrial sectors in regard to child labour during an Anti-Slavery Society survey carried out in 1978; see Child Labour in Morocco's Carpet Industry, An Anti-Slavery Report, (London, 1978).

4. National Census of Population and Housing. Iranian Statistical Centre, 1966.



the town. Sometimes, if a woman's family raised sheep and had sufficient wool, and (equally important) if the women knew how to weave, she might use her loom to weave carpets as a luxury item and thing of value for their household. The wool obtained from a family's own animal resources was spun and dyed locally by women and used in weaving kilim or for making socks and shirts for family members, since these goods were rarely available in the village during that period. Or the yarn spun and dyed might be exchanged in the town market for everyday consumer goods. Owing to the lack of modern tools for the work, the whole succession of sub-processes such as shearing, washing, combing and spinning by hand took the women a long time. One woman who was interviewed estimated that it took her three or four months to do all this work, even with the assistance of many female relatives and neighbours. In addition to spinning and other processes, the laborious business of dying

wool with natural pigments was also women's work. The dyestuff was not provided ready-made from the bazaar. Women used (and still sometimes use) chalk or churned milk to turn wool white. Aniline might be used for black and for other colours they used the roots of various grasses.

It was only after the 1960s' economic boom in the village (which had been generated in consequence of land distribution and of the introduction of capitalist relationships to the village and even more by the distribution of low-interest loans from the state credit institutions) that carpet making really began in the village (see Chapter 1, p. 60).

The success of Xānim-nana's enterprise soon spread throughout Doniq. Daughters and wives were sent to learn how to weave and the skill was passed on from relative to relative, neighbour to neighbour and friend to friend, so that the craft is now a skill every woman is expected to have at her fingertips. It is very uncommon to find a house without a loom and a weaver, unless there are exceptional reasons for it such as old



Two sisters weaving a carpet.

age, immigration from another village or the town and consequent ignorance of weaving, or sickness and poverty. Out of 103 families in Doniq, 90 households possess looms and weave regularly and 13 others own looms, but do not weave because of one or other of the above-mentioned extenuating circumstances. Altogether carpet weaving is now an important source of income for nearly all families in Doniq and provides a regular job and an unending cycle of work for women.

### Organization of production -

At the outset of the expansion of the industry some families in Doniq used to weave for merchants from the town or for some prosperous families of the village who supplied the raw materials, claimed the finished products and paid wages to the weavers. However, nowadays with the exception of two families, all families of the village are independent producers; they themselves pay for the raw materials in advance and have control of their finished product. The two families who cannot afford to buy the raw materials in advance (even if they have enough capital at some point in the year to purchase materials, they cannot spare the money for the entire period taken to weave the carpet) are employed by local people who raise sheep and have extra wool in addition to what they need for their own use. These two households of weavers who work for other villagers are supplied with the basic materials and there is no limit to the length of time in which they must complete the carpets. Whenever a carpet is completed, the contractor claims the product and pays the direct producers something like 700 Tomān (£43) out of the 2000 Tomān (£125) which is the total value of the carpet.

The weavers in Doniq, who are made up mainly of women and little girls, are specialised in only one of the carpet-making operations: weaving. For yarn production, which was previously carried out by the village women themselves, the weavers

are now heavily dependent on specialist workers and on yarn dealers in the town. Even the families who breed sheep and have their own wool, prefer to have it spun and dyed by specialists in order to be able to give more time to weaving which is more productive and profitable. The techniques of weaving in Doniq, as elsewhere in Iran are extremely primitive. The hand-loom - 'Hana-tö' is an upright one formed of wood in a rectangular frame. It consists of an upper or warp beam - 'üst-tö' and a lower or cloth beam - 'ält-tö', the ends of which are fixed into slots in the side pieces - hanas. Under the cloth beam there is a thinner beam - dāğ dāğā to which the ends of the upper and lower warps are tied. The tension of the warp threads is maintained by another thinner pole - dāl āğāji which is positioned between the lengths of warp in the middle of the loom. On the whole cotton and wool are the most common materials used in weaving. The warp and weft of the carpet are almost always woven in cotton since it provides a strong foundation. Cotton is elastic and produces a strong and even fabric which shrinks evenly and forms a good backing for the carpet, since it does not slip in the floor. For knotting, wool is used. To make each knot, the weaver grasps two warp strings firmly in one hand and pulls them towards her so that she can then form the knot with a length of coloured yarn, usually two or three inches long, which she hooks on to the pair of warps. She repeats this action across the entire width of the carpet.

The instruments used in this craft consist of: a pičāx - a sort of combined blade and hook - which is used to knot the wool and then to cut the yarn as each knot is tied; bijah - a comb beater - which is used for beating in the wefts passed above each of the knotted stitches; dafa - a second beater like a short blunt sabre with a heavy metal body and a wooden handle, used to beat down again on the whole length of the weft thread crossing the width of the carpet so that the wefts are evenly packed into the fabric; dārāx - a simple special comb



- which is used to comb the woven yarns, and finally a pair of big shears - gayči used to trim off the ends of the yarn when each row of knots is finished. When the carpet reaches a certain height, it has to be lowered. To lower the carpet, the dāl āgāji which is used to regulate the tension of the warp is withdrawn from the middle of the warp threads so that the warp becomes loose and the carpet is free. The woven part is pulled up behind the loom, the weaver's seat is lowered and the work of weaving begins again. The whole operation of knotting, cutting the yarns, passing and beating the wefts and lowering the carpet is repeated over and over until the carpet is complete. A carpet three metres long by one metre wide is made up of 50 gul - flowers on the long side and each of these gul contains 20 čin or rows of knots, measuring lengthwise, and 250 knots, measuring across the width of the carpet. This means that a woman expected to complete a gul a day, has to tie 5000 knots besides carrying out the other operations of passing two wefts across the warp, beating them along their entire length, combing the yarn and trimming off the surface.. This may give some indication of how laborious, wearisome and monotonous carpet weaving really is.

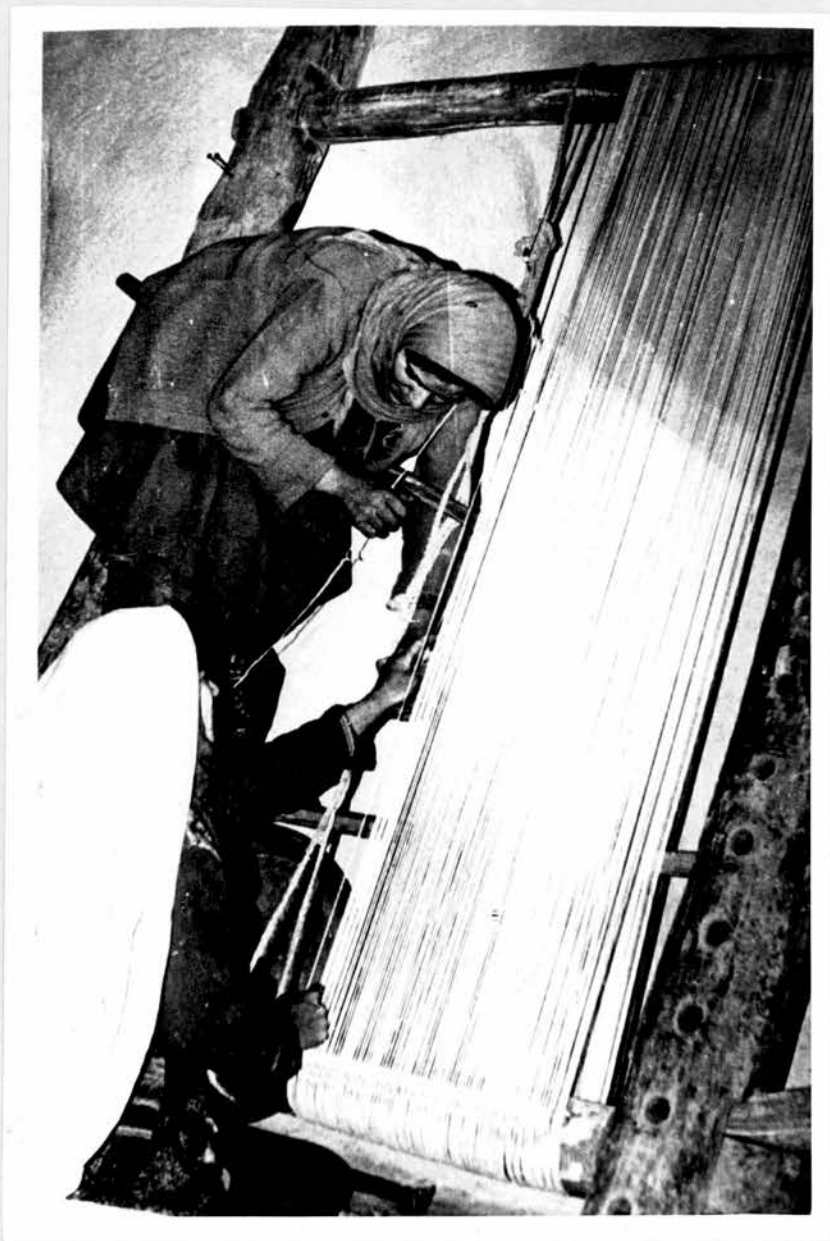
The kind of carpet produced in Doniq is of the tribal type called kanāra - runners - which are woven in various sizes. The commonest sizes (in metres) are the "3XI" and the "4XI". In other words, the size of kanāra depends totally on the size of the labour force in the household. Two or three women usually weave a "4XI" and one woman often weaves a 2XI or 3XI strip. The village women work on particular designs learned from their mothers. The pattern is called šūtri. The background of this šūtri is a shade of camel with lozenge-shaped medallions set against it. This type of carpet is one of the commonest, most famous kind of carpets produced all over North West Iran. Two out of three medallions are red with a cream lozenge in the centre and these shapes are bordered by dark blue. Certainly the knowledge of a different pattern or style will dist-

inguish one weaver from another.

The kanāra woven in Doniq are not of good quality. Besides the small size of the carpet, the type of knot used in it reduces its value. The knots woven in Doniq carpets are not of the closely woven kind. In Iran, the quality of carpet is recognized very easily by the quality of wool, and a number of knots woven per seven-centimetre square. The following qualities are produced in North West Iran: 25 x 25, 30 x 30, 35 x 35, 40 x 40, and 60 x 60 per 7 centimetre square. Of these 25 x 25 indicates a low grade carpet because only 25 knots are woven per seven centimetres. This type of carpet is mostly used locally. On the other hand, 40 x 40 or 60 x 60 carpets are of very high quality because of their tightly woven knots.<sup>1</sup> The quality of carpet produced in Doniq is of 25 x 25 which is the lowest grade and these rugs are mostly sold in the Azarbāyjān area.

Carpet weaving is a job which progresses very slowly. Women in Doniq do not work at carpet-making in an organized way and for set lengths of time. The work is carried out at home and is therefore subject to interruption by family and household duties. Consequently it is difficult to arrive at more than a rough estimate of the time spent each day completing a flower - 5000 knots. When one asks a weaver how many hours she usually spends on weaving each day, she answers that she does not know, but that she started her carpet, say ten days ago or two weeks ago. Usually a woman's work is measured on a monthly basis. Village women estimated that one woman is able to complete a 3XI kanāra in three months and two or three weavers can make a carpet of the same size in a month and a half. However I timed one of the weavers to see how long it took her to finish a row - 250 knots - in addition to other operations, and consequently to calculate the number of

1. Edwards, op. cit., p. 58.



Setting up the warp on the loom.

hours spent per day in completing a "flower". She worked fast and with accuracy and usually tied a knot with a flick of her wrist and finished the row in 25 minutes. Thus approximately 10 hours appeared to be required to finish 5,000 knots. Normally, a woman who has no assistance with her various household tasks and her childminding makes an effort to complete one flower (5,000 knots) a day, and two or three women who work cooperatively on a carpet and who also assist each other in domestic tasks are able to finish at least one and a half flowers (7,000 or 8,000 knots) a day. Therefore, considering that a 3XI carpet is made up of 50 gúl, it takes one woman 50 days and two or three women roughly 37 days to complete the flowers of a carpet. Although the flowers make up the major work involved in producing the carpet. There are also other necessary and time-consuming procedures which must be taken into account.

Before the work of weaving can begin, weavers must spend several days in preparatory processes such as forming the rough skeins of ready-spun cotton and wool into balls and setting up the warp on the loom. The business of laying the warp directly on the beams takes roughly four days for two women to complete. In addition, throughout the production of a piece, a weaver has to repeat the performance of 'lowering' the carpet from three or four times, which certainly occupies a few hours on each occasion and postpones the daily completion of the flower. Besides, at least two days are required to carry out some elaborate work that is necessary to finish off the carpet. (A strip of cloth is formed by passing the wefts back and forth through the warps; then the warp ends are trimmed and knotted to form fringes and to end the selvages of the carpet). Finally, when a whole piece is completed, a weaver normally has to take a week off until the finished product is marketed and an extra supply of yarn is provided for the next weaving project. All these stages in the work, then, cause delay in production, so that, on average, three months are required for one woman to



finish a whole carpet and six weeks for two or three weavers.

However, in spite of the long hours weavers spend making carpets, the basic materials used in weaving are not of good quality, with the result that the carpets fetch low prices and the earnings they bring in appear quite insignificant and inconsistent with the time consumed in their production. If the same number of hours were spent in weaving with fine materials, the profit margin would be much greater. The total price received for a piece of kanāra is 2,000 Tomān (£125) of which 700 Tomān (£43) is kept back to buy a new supply of materials and so only 1300 Tomān (£81) is left to represent the wages for 10 hours of work a day for three months for one woman and the wages of six weeks work by two or three women. Families cannot afford to pay for better quality raw materials; nor are they willing to take the risks involved in higher investment. Nevertheless, like women in North London who do piece work at home under contract to a firm or to its intermediary,<sup>1</sup> women in Doniq did not appear to consider their income in terms of the time it took them to carry out the work, nor in relation to the market value of their product. They appeared to be urged along in their work chiefly, and maybe only, by the need to earn cash. They assess their earnings in terms of the overall sum they bring in in every month or every three months, seemingly giving scarcely any thought to the number of hours they have to work to realize the money. Indeed, even if the income resulting from carpet weaving does not appear to compare favourably with the time and effort expended on it, nevertheless (as will be discussed later in this chapter) in comparison with the total income and expenditure of families and the income brought into the families by their menfolk, the overall profit made annually from the carpets completed by these women is of enormous economic importance to their families.

1. E. Hope, M. Kennedy and A. Winter, "Homeworkers in North London", in Barker and Allen, op. cit., pp. 88-108, especially p. 97.

Owing to the intense economic need felt by families for the "carpet income", women themselves feel a powerful sense of duty to work at carpet weaving and regularly concentrate on it. But the male members of households play the role of chief organizers and controllers. Women are asked and expected by their male relatives - fathers, brothers and husbands - to complete a "flower" (5,000 knots a day) at all costs. Women said that their menfolk often asked them not to do any other domestic duties but just to concentrate on weaving. However the women asked resentfully how it could be possible to avoid the essential jobs of cooking bread, processing dairy products and doing cleaning and washing up, and just spend the whole day weaving. One of these women said,

"even if men seem to be honestly asking their women just to weave carpets and not to do any other domestic tasks, in reality when the house is untidy or their food and tea is prepared a bit late, they get angry and even beat their wives up. A few days ago I unintentionally served my husband's tea in an unwashed cup; he got angry and threw the cup with the tea out into the courtyard."

Late every evening, the men in the village check their women-folks' carpets to see if the expected amount has been woven. If the flower has been completed and some more rows have even been added to it, they are very happy and cheerful and may exchange some words with the women and children; otherwise they will grumble for hours and hours. The men in the village hardly concern themselves with how their women manage the daily weaving of five or eight thousand knots along with other domestic activities. They only receive the work from the women. Generally, they are serious and severe in the households, especially in relation to weaving. I asked a male informant if he helped in the household or asked his wife how she handled all her many jobs at the same time. He said,

"We know our women very well. If we help them or ask how they manage their work, that very moment they get up from the loom and pretend that they are sick and cannot weave. If you are not serious, the work cannot progress. Instead of helping her or asking how she is feeling, it is better to give her a bit of a spanking from time to time to make her work faster and more regularly."

It is important, in fact, to consider just how women do tackle their domestic duties along with 10 hours of weaving. On the one hand a woman's primary role is to be a mother and housewife. On the other hand, at the same time and in the same place she is a productive worker and income earner who functions under the pressure of domestic responsibilities, the control of her menfolk and out of financial necessity. On the whole, women are unwilling to curtail their services to their husbands and children. They try to fit weaving around domestic routines and not vice versa. It is done in whatever odd time is available during the day between housework, cooking and looking after children, or late in the evening.

In households where there is only one woman, she usually concentrates first on the domestic tasks, then in the evening she sits at the loom, often until after midnight. Nevertheless a woman is often unable to complete her piece within the expected time. She asks an unmarried sister or another girl closely related to her who has finished her own carpet and is on "vacation" (usually weavers take a week off after completing every piece) to be an Imaji - 'helper' - to assist her in weaving. Women never go as Imaji to strange households unless they are very poor. The Imaji is not paid, but is given a good lunch - usually broth which relieves the monotony of bread and yoghurt. A poor girl might be an Imaji for a month, weaving from seven o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock in the evening and in the end she might be given a pair of shoes or a veil, as a present. The price of this gift would be four or five pounds at most. The Imaji system is currently used among relat-

ives and neighbours on the basis of reciprocal help. A woman who is given help with her weaving is expected to give help in return , not simply with weaving, but on any other occasions.

The situation is different for women who make up a labour force of three or four in one household. In this sort of household, younger women usually concentrate on weaving and the older ones deal with the routine domestic tasks. For instance in a nuclear household, where a mother has her unmarried daughters living with her, the latter usually form the primary labour force in weaving. Their mother does the housework and often plays the role of manager and controller, substituting for her husband, though she herself sometimes joins her daughters after she finishes her daily jobs around the household. Daughters constitute an important labour force in the carpet industry when they are very young. They start to learn weaving when they are under five years of age, when they combine it with other tasks. But until seven or eight years, they are rather better at child-minding, fetching water or fuel and at washing at the river than at weaving. Normally from the age of 8-10 they begin to be more productive and to work on carpets full-time, which means during all the daylight hours and even during some hours after nightfall with a very small paraffin lamp beside them, giving off poor light. They often have their meals at the loom and their encouragement to weave is the sound of the wefts being beaten in a next-door household. Sometimes, little girls hold bets with each other in the evening before they start weaving and check each other's work the following morning to see which of them has been more nimble and woven more than the other.

In extended households where brothers live with their families or parents live with one or two married sons, carpet weaving is usually the job of the youngest daughter-in-law who sits on the loom long hours a day along with one or two of the unmarr-



ied daughters of the household. For a young wife who has recently entered a strange household, this is the time when she, as a newcomer must prove her efficiency and loyalty to the group by weaving diligently. The older sisters-in-law (HBW) or mother-in-law control her work; if she shows the slightest laziness or slowness, they give her a warning and sometimes complain to the menfolk of the household who will warn her further. The out-put of carpet-weaving is always greatest and most satisfactory in the nuclear household where a mother lives with her unmarried daughters and in the kind of extended family where there is a mother-in-law with only one newly married daughter-in-law. In the first type of family, the independence of the household and the close identification between mother and daughters seem to be incentives to the women to weave vigorously and to achieve an effective output of carpets. In the second kind of household, although the young daughter-in-law does not really identify with her mother-in-law or feel united with her, her insecure position and the fact that she is subject to the authority of her mother-in-law makes her weave hard and produce more than is usually expected of one woman. The quieter and more passive she is and the harder she weaves, the sooner and better her relationship with her in-laws will stabilize.

In contrast to these two kinds of families, in households where two or three sisters-in-law (HBW) live together, especially women who are middle-aged and have given birth to many children, the hierarchical relationship between them has to some extent been eliminated and therefore carpet-weaving does not progress very quickly. In fact, the output is not even as great as that produced by one woman in a nuclear household. For there is usually rivalry and competition among the sisters-in-law. Each of them shirks her share of the work and leaves the responsibility to another or they all expect to sit at the loom in the same time, which is impossible because other tasks about the house would be left undone. In this way, unpleasant-

ness breaks out among them and a carpet may stay on the loom for six or seven months although there are two or three co-workers and normally they would be able to complete a piece in one or two months. The saying was often repeated that when women live in extended households they are unwilling to weave for their in-laws, but as soon as they move away from their in-laws and set up an independent household, they start weaving on two looms, one during the day and another one during the night. The reason suggested by women themselves, was that in communal living, however hard you work it is of no use to you. Other people who are not related to your own family and who outnumber you, will receive more benefit than you and enjoy a better life, or even if you go to a lot of trouble and self-sacrifice by weaving night and day, later on when you separate from the in-laws or the property of the family is divided among its various members, you receive merely the same share as a woman who has enjoyed herself and has not worked as hard as you worked. On the other hand in an independent family where you live with your husband and children, you are sure that when you work hard at your weaving and produce more, the profit will go to your own children and will improve the standard of living of your own family. Because of this, in most patrilocal extended families, even if several families live in the same establishment, the men of each family see it as advisable to set up independent looms for their wives to work on, each man is then free to spend the income from his wife's weaving independently. In this way the women are encouraged to persevere in weaving.

In addition to pressure from the men, another encouragement for women in carpet weaving is the force exerted by women themselves. On the whole, skill in weaving is considered a mark of social distinction and adds to the reputation of a woman among women themselves. Anyone who weaves regularly and rapidly and shows special skill, is known as smart and effec-

ient and is a target for competition and envy. She is spoken of by the men and also among the women as lācin - a clever and active woman whose husband is a very lucky man. On the other hand, a weaver who appears rather lazy and who does not complete her piece in the expected period, is often reminded of her failings and even blamed and ridiculed by neighbours and female relatives. Just as women compete in the business of having children they also compete over productivity in carpet weaving. A woman never likes lagging behind a rival weaver. There are always inquiries made among them at the spring or the mosque, at weddings and other social gatherings, "how much have you woven?", "when did you start?", "how many carpets have you woven this year?" The answers give the questioner some idea of how to adjust the pace of her work to match or even outstrip her rivals.

#### Economic importance of carpet weaving

Unlike other domestic routines, carpet manufacture is regarded by men as 'work' and as 'important', because it brings in money and because its contribution to the income of the family is visible, obvious and vital. In the first chapter I discussed the recent modifications in the way of life of the village and the new wealth which has been introduced to Doniq as the result of the expansion of the carpet industry. Here I should like to indicate in more detail the regular contribution the industry makes to family subsistence. To clarify the significance of the contribution of the industry, it seems essential to give details of the annual consumption of a family in terms of basic necessities as well as to describe the contribution which is made by land and animal husbandry, two other important resources of the villagers. As indicated before, the villagers' staple food consists of bread and dairy products which are produced locally. Most families' plots of land are too small to supply their annual requirements of flour for bread and fodder for animals, quite apart from providing them with a surplus to sell for



Buying clothes from a travelling salesman.



Second-hand clothes dealer.



cash, which they need to buy consumer goods.

Supplementary supplies of fodder and flour have to be purchased to cover certain times of the year. There are certain other commodities which must also be purchased to supplement the villagers' basic food, not to raise them to an ideal standard of living, but simply to allow them to survive in the village. These basic items include sugar, tea, salt and paraffin. Of course, other commodities such as meat, rice, various kinds of beans, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, green vegetables, fats and so on are purchased, but for special occasions such as weddings, funerals and feasts and when guests are expected. Besides, each household has to be supplied with a certain amount of clothing. The villagers' clothes are mostly cheap, worn-out second hand things which are bought in the town or occasionally in the village itself, in which case they are brought to the village from the town by the kühna pältär sātān - 'the second hand dealer'.

Apart from all the supplies which must be purchased regularly, the villagers need savings for emergencies and in particular for medical treatment and medicine which is the main usurper of the villager's wealth because he is at such a disadvantage due to the poor hygiene in the village and to malnutrition and lack of medical services. Besides, there are various necessary journeys which a villager has to make during the year. These include visiting married children, for instance, or taking part in the weddings and funerals and so on of relatives who live in the town or in neighbouring villages. Because of the recent improvement of transport, as the result of which people have easy access to the town market, the establishment of two stores in the village (which put the villagers within reach of supplies for most of the year) and the regular visits of the pedlar who brings fruits, vegetables, cloth and varied stocks of necessities to the village, the consumption of all kinds of goods has increased among the villagers. Unlike the former situation

they no longer have to go without sugar or tea and other necessary commodities for days on end (see Chapter 1, p. ) or as one informant put it they no longer need to keep in a box an apple which happened to be given to them by a visitor arriving from the town, taking it out occasionally to look at it or smell it. Nowadays, most of the villagers have fruit to eat, even if it is from time to time and at least two or three times a year they are able to buy meat. Items bought in the town cost least, while goods in the village shops are more expensive and the pedlars charge most of all. Consequently village people like to make the most of their purchases in the town whenever possible.

It is in fact, very difficult to give a general picture of the annual revenue and the consumption of food by all the families in the village because the number of family members, the number of flocks and the sizes of the strips of land they own, vary considerably. However I have chosen a sample family of 6-8 members with 7-10 cattle and 3 acres land since this is about average for Doniq. Discounting such extra expenses as goods only occasionally consumed and focusing on the expenses of the family's basic food (flour, tea, sugar, oil and fodder for animals) I have attempted to draw a rough picture of their annual income and expenditure and to clarify the contribution of carpet making to it.

On average, the family under consideration consumes annually 5 xarvār - (1500kg) at a cost of 2272 Tomān (£142) in flour for bread; 1000 bales of fodder costing 10,000 Tomān (£625) plus 1860kg cotton seed and straw valued at 4960 Tomān (£310) for animals. They also require approximately 2200 Tomān (£135) for tea, sugar and oil. The total sum of money needed comes to about 19,500 Tomān (£1,212).

As noted in the first chapter, the farmers traditionally divide the land, irrespective of its size, into two parts. One part is

farmed one year and the other is left to lie fallow for a year before being farmed again. Thus, a farmer may benefit from only half of his land in any one year. That is to say that out of three acres of land, only 1.5 acres can be utilized each year. On average, 2 xarvār (600kg) of wheat and grain (valued at 1,296 Tomān = £81) and 300 bales of fodder (3000 Tomān = £187 in value) are harvested yearly from 3 acres of land. Of the wheat and grain obtained, 150 kg is kept for cultivation, leaving 450 kg for annual consumption. In relation to the husbandry of animals and the benefits to be gained thereby, people estimated that apart from the dairy products they retain for consumption in the household they are able to produce 10kg butter for sale per month, or 120kg yearly. At the current price (£2 per kg) this raises a total of 5,952 Tomān (£372). Thus the total income brought in from the basic resources - farm land and flocks is about 10,240 Tomān (£640). The Table shows the details of the discrepancy between food production and food requirements for a family of six to eight members owning seven to ten animals. Table A demonstrates the situation if the family owns 3 acres, and Table B indicates the results of the same calculation when the family has a piece of land of only 1½ acres.

TABLE A: 3 Acres

	Total Produced	Total Required
Flour	600 kg 1,296T (£81)	1500 kg 2,272T (£142)
Fodder	300 kg 3,000T (£187)	1000 kg 10,000T (£625)
Cotton seed	—	1860 kg 4,960T (£310)
Tea, sugar, oil	—	
Butter	120 kg 5,952T (£372)	—
	<b>Total 10,240T (£640)</b>	<b>Total 19,560T (£1,212)</b>

Deficit 9,152T  
(£572)

**TABLE B: 1½ Acres**

	Total Produced	Total Required
Flour	300 kg 656T (£41)	1500 kg 2,272T (£142)
Fodder	150 B 1,504T (£94)	1000 B 10,000T (£625)
Cotton seed	—	1860 kg 4,960T (£310)
Tea, sugar, oil	—	
Butter	120 kg 5,952T (£372)	
	Total 8,112T (£507)	Total 19,500T (£1,212)
		Deficit 11,280T (£705)

Although the family of 6-8 members owned 7-10 animals and 3 acres land producing goods with a market value of £640 from their primary resources, they required £1,212 to meet their annual needs. Productivity is still less for families owning less land (one and a half acres) and none for landless families. It should be borne in mind that £640 or £705 are required to supply only basic items of food (flour, dairy products, tea, sugar and oil) and villagers certainly need extra money for clothing, medicine and other necessities. Although they may sometimes sell of one or two animals and men may work as casual labourers in the nearby town and so contribute to the required amount, the major burden of bridging the income gap falls upon the carpet weavers. The number of pieces produced in a household depends on the number of women. The more their number in a household, the greater the profit. On average, 4 pieces of carpets are produced by one woman per year, the total profit of these amounting to 5,200 Toman (£325) while 8 or 9 pieces, (valued at 11,696 Toman = £731) are normally produced in one year by two or three women. These pieces are of enormous importance to the family's livelihood, supplementing the fodder for animals and flour and other necessary goods for the family. By working very hard most women have been able to



save their families from poverty and some have even made it possible for their husbands to give up having to work as wage labourers in the towns, so that now they organize permanent jobs for themselves such as sheep breeding, or they may open a shop for example. Some people have bought the land of people who have left to go to the city for some reason or other. One woman said,

"We have only 1 acre of land which is of no value. We had only one buffalo when we separated from his family. I have been working very hard. There was a year when I completed 8 carpets, though I was on my own. We were eventually able to add to our animals. He used to work as a construction labourer in Sarab or sometimes he went to gönbad<sup>1</sup> - (a major city in the North West of Iran) to sell watermelon in the streets. Last year we managed to make six carpets. My husband sold them and opened a shop and bought a motor-cycle for himself."

Another said,

"We don't have land at all. My husband always used to go and wander about from town to town to find a job. Now I don't allow him to go. We live only on the carpet money. I weave day and night and let my children and husband have a good life. He doesn't need to worry about the expenses and winter provisions."

### Marketing -

Although families in Doniq are independent producers who own their tools and materials for carpet manufacture, and take charge of marketing the carpets, nevertheless, in the final analysis as Sencer Avata (1979) notes in describing the independent weavers of Anatolia, their conditions of production and par-

1. The reason that this woman's husband used to go to Gonbad in search of work (rather than to some other major city) was that he had some close relatives living there, who provided housing and sometimes even food for him without charge.

ticularly their incomes are subordinate to capitalists in indirect and disguised ways.<sup>1</sup> To market the finished products, the producing households are dependent on the nearby town's carpet merchants. Sometimes the town carpet dealers sent their representatives to the village to buy the finished carpets. When the agent comes to the village, all the heads of the household bring the carpets woven by their womenfolk to the village square and bargaining takes place there between the village men and the merchant's agent. However it is more customary for the head of each household to take the completed work to the wholesale merchants or yarn dealers in Sarab market,<sup>2</sup> there various methods of business may be entered into. If the peasant needs ready money, he has to accept whatever price the wholesale dealer may offer him; otherwise, the peasant himself sets a price for the carpet, and after reaching an agreement with the merchant he leaves the carpet with him. The merchant then enters into his own bargaining with prospective customers. When the carpet is sold by the dealer, the dealer pays the peasant the price agreed between them earlier on. But the profits obtained through the final bargaining go to the merchant, not to the peasant.

Frequently the merchants or wholesalers deliberately criticize the head of household for alleged faults in the quality, design or colour of the carpet in order to be able to buy it for as low a price as they can, though the criticism might not be at all plausible. The merchants are completely in control of the timing of sales, and of the prices of the finished products, often reaping a large part of the surplus created by the direct producers.

1. S. Avata, "Capitalist Subordination of Household Production, Carpet Industry: Turkey", Discussion Paper for the B.S.A. Development Group, 1979, pp. 1-34 (pp. 9-10).

2. The merchants who sell carpets are more often than not the people who deal with selling the yarn. Therefore, they control the cost of the yarn and the cost of carpet manufacture as well as the prices of the finished product. They do not engage in credit giving to the weavers.

Of course the direct producers in Doniq are women, who have no control at all over the products of their own labour, because their carpets are marketed and the income controlled by their menfolk. Because of their seclusion, their work is carried out in private and in a "non-visible" workplace, and they are unable to have direct contact with the market to exchange their own products. A woman must always have a male protector to carry out for her the transactions involved in selling carpets and buying raw materials. Father, brother or husband usually concern themselves with the job and if they are not available the woman asks a more distant male relative or a neighbour to barter her products for her. Even when the carpet is sold in the village itself, the direct producers have no right to take part in the bargain. It is not for a woman to show herself or to talk to nā-mahram - 'men permitted in marriage'. More important, since a man is the manager of the family's business affairs and the major decision-maker about its internal and external affairs, it is for him to make any decision associated with carpet production. Any inquiry or comment on the part of the woman is taken as interference in the domain of men and as a threat to their authority in the household and over their wives. When Gulzar asked her son how much he had sold the carpet for, he answered,

"This time you asked about it, next time try not to do that. If you do, all your feet and hands will be broken."

In another case Sakina had woven four carpets the previous year. She did not want her husband to sell them yet, for she thought they were not particularly in need of the income from them. But her husband ordered her to roll them up and prepare them for him to take to the market. Sakina resisted and refused to do so. The husband became so angry that he got out the scissors to cut the carpets into pieces. The wife appealed to an old man living in her neighbourhood to go and save the

carpets and also to mediate and ask the husband to forgive Sakina and assure him that she would not interfere any more. In the end, although women manufacture carpets and their contributions are of great importance to the families' budgets, it is the menfolk who take control over their income through organizing the sale of the carpets.

It is also the men who make decisions about spending the income from the women's work. Men purchase the requirements of the household from the local shop or the town. Depending on their personalities they may be thrifty about their purchases, to the extent of not even buying enough of the goods that are absolutely essential, or they may be indulgent and apart from purchasing the necessary daily consumer goods, they may go on to buy some other basic items. It does not depend on the economic position of families. There are men who refuse to purchase sugar, tea, oil and other subsistence supplies for their families, though their economic position would allow such purchases. And there are others who not only buy the daily consumer commodities, but may also for instance purchase vegetables and fruit which are rarely consumed by families in the village.

Indeed, a woman who weaves carpets regularly can merely expect to be provided with the family's subsistence needs - food and clothes, but nothing extra. Women are rarely supplied with "pin money" which is often needed for their children or so that they may sometimes contribute to xeir-u-šar - 'good and bad events' - and make some little exchange of gifts which is a customary token of the bond of friendship among men and women alike. In desperation most women resort to stealing to meet their needs. They steal butter, eggs, wool and wheat during harvesting time to barter them with pedlars. Of course in some households there is no opportunity for them to do this, because the men make constant checks on their stocks of goods and livestock, and some were reported to check the hens before leaving



home every day to find out if they are going to lay eggs. Although women contribute increasingly to the family's income, the men control the marketing and receive the money, and it is they who are considered the only bread-winners. All the property and items of household use are considered to have been earned by men and to belong to them, and women have no right to use them without the permission of their men. The village mullā (religious leader) has taught both women and men that since the men earn the livelihood, it is unlawful - harām - for a woman to spend so much as a penny in the household without her husband's permission. If she does so, it will be considered theft and will be punished in the other world. A woman is not allowed to lend anything out from the household or spend anything to foster her own relations with her friends and relatives without the permission of her male relatives. Women are responsible only for taking care of the household items. If something is broken or missing, they will be regarded as responsible and considered inefficient and deserving of punishment. Very often during my stay in the village a woman was badly beaten by her husband because she or one of the children had broken a cup. In one case, one of Hāj-Xānīm's children lost the screw of a pressure cooker. Her husband beat her severely and warned her that he was going to sleep and that she should attempt to find it by the morning. If she failed, he would kill her. She searched for it all over the house; she looked in the ashes in the oven, all through the animal droppings in the stable, and all the mud in the courtyard, but could not find it. In early morning before her husband was awake, she went to one of her neighbours to borrow the screw from their pressure cooker so that she could pretend to her husband that she had found it. She promised her neighbour to bring it back when she had managed either to find her own to give money to someone to buy one from the town market. I was told of many cases of this kind. In another case, an informant reported that a few days previously her neighbour, Mansumah, had broken a bowl. From fear of her husband, she

hid the broken pieces in the hens' nest. When her husband was feeding the chickens, he noticed the broken pieces. Immediately he went and asked his wife to prepare a cup of tea for him saying that he wanted to drink it from that very bowl (drinking tea in small bowls is quite common in the village). His wife said that she had lent the bowl to his sister. The husband followed up the matter; and he went to his sister to ask for the bowl. As soon as he had gone to check with his sister, his wife took the pieces out of the nest and hid them in the ashes of the oven. Her husband came back and said that the bowl was not in his sister's hands and that he had seen it lying broken in the nest in the morning. He beat his wife for three hours continuously so that she became unconscious and her entire body was bruised. While he was beating her, he told her that he had instructed her several times before that whenever she or the children broke something she should let him know right away. Then if he wanted to beat her black and blue he could do it immediately to save himself (and her) from further effort. Most women are frightened of their husbands when something happens to any of their household items. Generally they make an effort to replace the broken item with something the same colour, size and quality at all costs without informing their husbands.

When a woman's husband dies, if her children are very young and she does not have a son old enough to take charge of the household, the mother runs the household; weaves carpets, earns their living and takes care of the children, but all the economic affairs and the family's property are taken charge of and controlled by her husband's male relatives. She has no power to take decisions about any of the family property. Safura (26 years of age) whose husband had been dead for five years, had three children, one daughter nine years old and two sons aged respectively fourteen and four. Her 14 year old son managed the land and took care of the animals and the mother wove carpets. But the eldest brother of her husband

came over occasionally to check up on everything, to see what had been lost or added to the household. The woman said,

"We didn't have enough money to meet our needs for this month. I asked my brother-in-law to allow us to sell one of our cattle, but he refused."

In summary, although a woman may be a carpet weaver and therefore a direct producer who furnishes produce regularly for sale in the market, she has not direct relations with the market. Her products are marketed by the men, and the income from her work and the use of the money remain in the hands of men. Money is their privilege and she remains totally dependent on men, even for her most basic needs. In fact, in this connection, two sorts of injustice are exercised in relation to the weavers of Doniq. On the one hand, the real profit of their work is reaped by capitalists, and because the sale of the carpets takes place indirectly through male members of the family, the women themselves never recognize their position. On the other hand, the income from their labour does not belong to them and their dependence on their male relatives is incompatible with the extremely hard work that they do and the high proportion of family income which they produce.

### The effects of carpet weaving

Some sociologists have noted that changes in economic bases and relations lead immediately or gradually to changes in behaviour and in social values. Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, for instance, in their historical paper, "Women's Work and the Family in the Nineteenth Century", have examined what happened throughout Europe when a traditional economy in which family and household formed the crucial unit of organization was urbanized and industrialized and production was concentrated in large workshops. Family structure changed and with that came alterations to the interdependence of family members, relation-

ships between the sexes and many social values.<sup>1</sup>

Starting from the same assumption, I have examined the situation in Doniq and have found that there, too the recent economic developments and the introduction of the carpet industry seem to have led to some modifications and transformations in cultural values, and relationships within the family which have had some positive as well as negative impact on women. I am going to discuss the impact of carpet weaving on women's position in the same order as has been examined in the previous chapters in relation to their traditional work. Firstly the area of marriage will be covered, then domestic labour and finally childbearing.

## Marriage

### (1) Economic dependence of women

The recent developments and the changes in the economic basis of Doniq society has resulted in alterations in the type and amount of work required of women, involving them considerably in an income-creating job. Yet no transformation has occurred in the economic dependence of women.

A woman cannot make a claim on her father's estate, though she might contribute to the income of her father's family for years before she marries. Her legal religious rights are appropriated by her natal family's male members while the products of her labour are taken charge of by her husband who is privileged to do so on account of his 'maleness' and his rights to guardianship. In spite of all her work, a woman is regarded

and called by both sides (natal and affinal families) *kasih* -

1. J. Scott and L.A. Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17 (1975), pp. 36-64; see also A. Blukbāši, "Farhang-e Jame' h va Sāxt-e Ejtema' i, in *Majalle-ye Mardom Šenāsi va Farhang-e Āme-ye Iran*, 2 (1354 sh.), pp. 9-56.

compassionate towards her, in addition to sending pro-



and called by both sides (natal and affinal families) kasih - one who herself does not earn a livelihood and is always dependent on people for maintenance. Parents often refer to their daughter as kasih - and for this reason they tend to be very compassionate towards her. In addition to sending presents to her on many occasions, they try to call on her frequently on ordinary days, taking things for her and checking to see how she is faring in her husband's house. Both sides believe that the strange man has no absolute obligation to provide for her. Her natal family should cooperate with her husband to maintain her. When she falls ill, her blood-kin are expected to contribute to her treatment. The 'stranger' does not feel total responsibility, for there is always a possibility for him to replace her. The regular contribution of a woman's natal family to her maintenance affects her husband's treatment of her.

Furthermore, under Islamic law, a woman in the position of a wife is entitled to receive a portion of her husband's estate. She is entitled to a fourth of her husband's property if she has no children; otherwise she receives an eighth.<sup>1</sup> In Doniq, both in theory and in practice, it is acceptable for a wife to receive  $\frac{1}{8}$  of her husband's estate if she has children; otherwise she is entitled to  $\frac{1}{13}$  and the remaining part belongs to her deceased husband's brothers and children. Of course, her inheritance is hers only on the condition that her husband willed it to her. If a husband did not wish his wife to receive property, his wife cannot receive anything from his estate, though she may have worked in his house throughout her life.

Another important point is that what she receives normally includes only moveable items such as flocks and household articles. Fixed property like land, buildings and so on rarely forms part of her inheritance. Since it is impossible for a woman to live on moveable and household items alone and since,

1. Quran, 4:11-12.

owing to the 'pardah system' and to male domination of society, a woman always needs a male relative for protection and to execute her affairs, mothers almost always choose to give up their inheritance to their sons and to live under their protection. Only one woman has been reported to receive land from her husband in his will. She preferred to live in an independent household and to spend the income from the land independently. The village women said that she is the only woman in the village who enjoys economic independence. The land is worked by her sons, but its income is allotted to her: she also weaves carpets regularly and takes full control over her output. Her sons sell her products in the market and hand over the profits to their mother. It is for her to decide how to spend her income in whatever way she wishes. She goes to visit her married daughters living away from Doniq at any time she wishes, taking them presents and spending money on her grandchildren and thus she enjoys a special respect among her relatives. But it was pointed out explicitly that the sons of that woman are very exceptional because no son normally accepts the responsibility of managing the land and undergoes a great deal of trouble to work the fields and yet delivers the income to his mother to spend just as she likes.

However, we see that under normal circumstances, a woman is always dependant for her maintenance on her male relatives throughout her life. No change has taken place in her economic status. Her inheritance entitlements are ignored and her seclusion from contact with the market deprives her from having access to the income generated by her work. She receives only ephemeral things such as clothing and foodstuffs and this emphasizes and highlights her reliance and dependence on men for even the smallest of her basic requirements. Therefore, marriage is still the only source of financial support for women in Doniq.

Nevertheless, as the result of the expansion of the carpet ind-

ustry, some features of the 'marriage institution' have been modified - bringing with them minor changes in the status of women.

## (2) Eligibility for marriage

The skill of carpet weaving is now considered an important criterion in the choice of a girl for marriage. The girl who does not know how to weave has little chance of marriage, however beautiful she might be and however good the background of her family might be. Carpet weaving is considered a sign of efficiency for an unmarried girl and a new bride. A new bride who knows weaving, especially if she shows special speed and skill in weaving, can lead a more peaceful life with her in-laws than the one who does not weave. Before the development of the industry in the village, informants reported, families used to prove the work efficiency and capability of new brides by making them pour water from one narrow-necked jug to another. If the bride did it in the correct way so that not a drop was spilled on the floor, she was considered capable of hard work. It was also reported that before the growth of carpet manufacture, those girls who had a large group of male (brothers and maternal and paternal uncles and cousins) received many good offers, because either her male relatives would add their allegiance to her marital male kin (emphasis on the power relationship in the village) or the bride herself would receive many presents at festivals because of the large size of her kingroup. With the development of the industry these criteria are no longer so vital. Any girl who knows how to weave and who is not defective is considered an ideal wife and receives an appropriate offer at the proper time. If she cannot weave, a girl's marriage opportunities are diminished, or if someone proposes for this sort of girl, it would be on the condition that she would learn weaving during her betrothal time.

However, on the whole, among unmarried girls it is very excep-

tional to find a girl who does not know how to weave. The older women have experienced from their own in-laws the merits of weaving and the disadvantages of not weaving. They know very well that if a woman does not contribute to her family's budget by weaving, she will not be able to lead a contented life. Therefore, they play an important role in ensuring that the young women in their charge will learn weaving from early childhood and that each girl will be an expert by the time of her marriage. Mothers feel very proud when their newly married daughters produce for their in-laws more carpets than normally expected.

### (3) Age of marriage

Another change which has come about because of carpet production by women is the age of marriage. It has been indicated in the chapter on marriage that women used to be given as brides at a very early age. The census on the age of marriage indicates that the majority of women in the age group of 35-65 were married at the age of 8-10. Informants pointed out that most women who were married a number of years ago were carried to their husbands' house in their parents' bosoms and admitted that the consummation of marriage during childhood had damaged their health. I came across some women of the same age group whose backs were bent. Without my asking, they said they were not born like that, but as the doctors had told them, the reason for the deformity was marriage during childhood and the fact that they had begun having children when they were mere adolescents. Some other women complained about womb diseases and lumbago and complained about their own parents who had brought about these unfortunate problems by sending them to their husbands' households so early. Various reasons and justifications were put forward by parents for marrying off daughters who were still children. One important reason was the poverty of the parents. The carpet industry was not then practised in the village and girls were, thus, 'unproduct-



ive' and therefore 'useless' burdens whom their parents were anxious to send away as soon as possible so that they would be free of their maintenance.

Haji Majid (85 years of age) who had seen four daughters of his sent out into marriage at 8-10 years of age, said,

"In the old days things were very bad. Nobody could find food and clothes. Anyone who had a daughter, used to go up onto the roof of the mosque and cry out for people to come and collect his daughter as a bride. The father and mother always prayed to God that their daughter would get married as soon as possible. People used to arrange a little girl's marriage when she was in her swaddling clothes and still being breast-fed. Now times have changed for the better."

Another factor affecting the age when girls marry has been the religious ideas of the people. Though Islam does not set any age limit for marriageability, it is usual for orthodox Muslims including the Muslims of Doniq, to claim that child marriage is part of the very fabric of Islam; and they contend that the custom is sanctioned by the practice of Mohammad, who himself married a child-wife - A'isha and gave child wives in marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Besides this, the fear that girls might lose their virginity (which is all-important to men when they consider young girls as prospective wives) or that by some involvement with the opposite sex they might bring shame on their families and jeopardize their chances of marriage, has been highly conducive to child marriage. In addition, people have traditionally preferred very young brides, because they had a longer period of potential fertility ahead and early benefit could be taken of their children; and, more importantly, the younger they were,

1. Bevan Jones, op. cit., p. 91; and Levy, Introduction to the Sociology of..., op. cit., p. 153.

the more submissive they were likely to be to their husbands and in-laws and could adjust themselves more easily to the way of life of their marital household. Because of these conditions and strong religious and traditional values and customs, the national legal age for marriage could never be adhered to in Doniq. Iranian law has set the minimum age for the marriage of women at fifteen years and for men at eighteen years, although the courts sometimes permit them to marry earlier provided the girl's physical maturity can be attested by a health certificate from a proper medical authority.<sup>1</sup> But before the development of carpet weaving and the productivity of girls, this legislation was far from effective. The above-mentioned factors encouraging child marriage did not allow a close relationship between the actual age at marriage and the minimum age set by law for first marriage. The guardians always looked for any opportunity of circumventing the law. They would bribe the doctors to certify the physical maturity of their daughters, although they were not yet adolescent and would also bribe a religious leader to read the marriage xutba of a couple secretly. Two guardians would sign a private contract regarding the dowry of the girl; the boy's side giving a promissory for the amount of kabin - 'dower'-to the girl's father. They would not get the marriage of the couple registered until the young people had arrived at the legal age for marriage, though they might by then have had several children. Another possibility of which the guardians of the girls took advantage in order to avoid adhering to the laws about the age for marriage was irregular and inaccurate registration of vital events (birth and marriage) in the village, this is still practised in most parts of Iran. Many parents merely give an approximate age for their children, and thus raise their estimate to meet any rise in the legal age for marriage. They always get a birth certificate stating a birth date three or four years earlier for

1. Momeni, op. cit., p. 545; Levy, The Social Structure of Islam..., op. cit., p. 107; and Coulson and Hinchcliff, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

a new-born baby or keep the birth certificate of a daughter who has died, to use for a later girl.

Although the years of effort on the part of the national legal authorities to raise the age of marriage did not have much practical effect in the village, the development of carpet weaving (and the villagers' realization that girls had become a vital labour force in the industry) has resulted in a big change in their age of marriage. Since a girl has become economically more important, her parents make an effort to arrange for her marriage to take place a few years later so that they will have a longer period in which to benefit from her labour. That is to say, by staying at home longer she may weave a few more carpets for them. Both statistics in reference to marriages which have taken place recently and the census I have taken on the age of marriage indicate that the age at which women in the age group 15-35 have got married is about fourteen to sixteen. In other words since the expansion of the carpet industry, the age at which women first marry has been raised by approximately six or seven years. A girl may be betrothed at any age - at birth, when she is a little child or at puberty, because a guardian never wants to lose the opportunity of a suitable match simply because of the tender age of the girl. However the marriage is not consummated until the girl has arrived at puberty (14-16). During my stay in Doniq there were some little brides in the village, who were only at the age of five or seven and had been engaged when they were in the cradle. They stayed with their parents and were sent presents of sweets or clothes by their in-laws at every festival. But their parents said that they had contracted with the potential bridegrooms' guardians to deliver the brides when they reached the age of sixteen or seventeen. They said that unless the girls wove and supplied their own Jehez - 'dowry' - and also contributed something to their parents' income they would refuse to hand them over. Only in very exceptional cases, such as, for instance, when a mother-in-law is a relative and has no daughter or brides to

help her in the household, is the little bride sent to her in-laws, but on the strict condition that the boy (who is usually older than the girl) will not have sexual relations with her until she is old enough. It is believed that to make sure that the boy will not have sexual intercourse with the girl, her mother should keep with her a closed knife which has had a spell cast on it in order to bāgliā - curb the sexual feelings of the boy. In other words, should the boy want to have sex, he will be unable to do so. Women said that this process is effective. If the knife is ineffectual and the boy goes back on his word and has sexual relations with the girl, the heart of the mullā must not have been pure enough when he was reading the prayer on the knife. When the mother feels that the girl is mature enough, she opens the knife. At the same time, the boy is accompanied by his eldest brother in a walk around the village cemetery, looking at the dead people's graves: he will be reminded that one day he will be taken there, so he should enjoy the life now. In addition a prayer is written all over the body of the boy or his body is washed thoroughly with Qurān süvi - the water in which a Quran has been washed. Finally he eats 30 cooked unshelled eggs to return his sexual appetite to normal.

All in all, the ability on the part of women to earn a livelihood has led to an increase in the age of marriage and has become an obstacle to child marriages, which results, as Chekkie notes of the community of Kalyān in India, in

"early consummation, early maternity, and birth of sickly children, high incidence of infant and maternal mortality, debility and disease, too many children and poverty."<sup>1</sup>

There is also the likelihood that when girls marry at sixteen they are reasonably well able to withstand the domination of

1. Chekkie, op. cit., p. 710.



husbands just five or six years their seniors, whereas little girls, eight or ten years old are completely overwhelmed by husbands ten to fifteen years older than they are.

#### (4) Arrangement of marriage

The aspect of tradition which dictates that women's demeanour and virginity should be regarded as the 'honour' and 'zeal' of their male relatives and as crucial elements in establishing them in marriage, has not been affected at all. Consequently, the controls and restrictions placed on their behaviour and movements are as tight as before.

The powers women exercise over the choice of their own marriage partner and, later, that over the marriage of their children, are as limited as they were before women became involved in income-generating work.

Furthermore, women still have not the slightest say in the fixing of their marriage settlements - kabin - and bāšlix, however crucial their labour will be in their husbands' houses. Nevertheless, the rise in the contribution of women to the family income through carpet weaving has resulted in some alterations in the economic exchanges made at the time of marriage. As noted previously, in former times, people used to send the girls into marriage as early as possible to get rid of the burden of maintaining them, while the family who took them in marriage, received them reluctantly, for, as expressed in local terms, a 'bread-eater' - čörayh yiyan - rather than a 'bread-winner' - čörayh gatiran, was going to be added to the number of their mouths to feed. Today, there is competition for brides among families. The parents of a girl attempt to delay even at the proper time for her marriage, to take more advantage of her productivity and on the other hand, the family wanting to find a wife for a son, tries to make a proposal for a girl as early as possible. This motivates the family with a

daughter to raise their expectations from suitors in exchange for her labour.

Before the growth of the carpet industry in Doniq, the 'prompt' portion of the kabin - dower - which is known as bāšlix in the village was not paid to the parents of the girl at all. The whole of the specified kabin was to be claimed at the time of divorce or at the death of the husband (fully discussed in Chapter 3). After weaving became wide-spread compromises were agreed on among the men to pay a portion of kabin before the consummation for a marriage to compensate the girl's father for the loss of her labour in weaving as well as to help him provide dowry for his daughter, which is an obligation on his part. In fact, it is up to the father to fix a price for losing a member of his labour force. It is said that in the negotiation of the kabin among men, the girl's father repeatedly refers to her skill as a weaver in order to raise the amount of bāšlix. Or when the boy's father hesitates a little over the proposed amount of bāšlix by the girl's side, the latter points out, "why are you dithering so?! Imagine she has woven two or three pieces of carpet for you". Since fathers are now paid bāšlix, they are able to provide more Jehez - 'dowry' - for their daughters than they used to. An elderly informant said that today's girls have become very valuable because of carpet weaving. Their fathers are paid bāšlix and have to give a good Jehez and plenty of it for their daughters. In former times the fathers used to give only two spoons, a pair of bowls and a chest, but nowadays girls take everything from their parents' household - bed and floor coverings, kitchen utensils and so on.

While the rate of kabin and bāšlix has always had a direct relationship to the social and economic status of families, the current price of carpets on the market has not been without its own effect on the way the amount of a marriage settlement is

fixed. The rate of the bāšlīx and kabin rises in response to the rise of carpet prices in the bazaar. In the last few years the value of kabin has increased considerably - before carpet manufacture was introduced, the size of kabin ranged from 500 Tomān to 5000 Tomān, but now kabin amounts from 5000 Tomān to 20,000 Tomān. The situation is similar in the case of the price of carpet in the market - from 300 Tomān to 2,000 Tomān.

As in former times, women's fathers or brothers receive their bāšlīx and convert it into various impermanent articles which are presented to them as their dowry and are, in fact, considered their share of inheritance from their fathers' estates. Even then, women do not take direct control over the property given to them as dowry. In addition, the deferred part of their kabin is not discussed until the death of the husband. After the husband's death, if he was a property-owning man, his wife's kabin is deducted from the moveable articles of the household and handed over to her son, with whom a mother will normally live for the rest of her life. So, although the bāšlīx, kabin and jehez have increased in size, woman has no more control over them than she would have done before the introduction of carpet manufacture.

#### (5) The bride's position

The productivity of a bride in the carpet industry might help her to settle in marriage and establish her relationship with her in-laws, because a woman who does not know how to weave, is not readily sought as a bride and has no justification to settle happily in her husband's house. But this does not specifically mean that the power and control of in-laws, especially the mother-in-law over a newly married woman has been decreased. The bride's activities are still circumscribed and she is still under the authority of all the members of her husband's household.

Finally, a woman is as powerless as before over the decisions related to whether or not she can stay married.

### Domestic Work and Domestic Power

It was mentioned above that the domestic tasks and child bearing and rearing which women have to do, however time-consuming and burdensome, are not considered 'work' and the women who perform only domestic routines are regarded as parasites who are dependent on the labour of their menfolk for their basic needs. Indeed, after the expansion of the carpet industry which result in products being regularly exchanged in the market, the 'unimportance' and 'valuelessness' of housework have been highlighted and overtly manifested. Under traditional Islamic law, the primary role and duty of a woman is to engage in domestic tasks and be a good mother to her children and a good wife to her husband, and it is the responsibility and duty of men to provide for their women; before marriage, her father, brother and other close male guardians should support her, on the condition that they have the power to arrange her marriage, and once she is married, it is for her husband to feed, clothe and house her with the very important proviso that she remains obedient to him.<sup>1</sup>

However in Doniq, although women are mainly occupied by housework and are extremely obedient to their husbands, the latter refuse to provide for their wives unless they contribute to the expenses of the household through carpet making. The situation is made clearer if one compares the position of women who weave carpets with that of the women who are unable to do weaving for some reason or other. Women who have come from other villages and who do not know how to weave, or those who have given up weaving for reasons of sickness or old age, lead a hard life. The men generally believe that "anyone who doesn't make carpets, has no rights in life and even her daily meal is haram - prohibited for her". Mansumah who

1. Maududi, op. cit., p. 154; see also Fyze, op. cit., pp. 181-85.



had stopped weaving for a short while, because she was the only woman in a nuclear family, had no help with her housework and had little children to look after, said,

"Today I have been struck several times on my wrist. As soon as my husband left home today, I seized the opportunity to prepare an egg for myself. While I was eating it, he came back unexpectedly and hit me, asking me if I was working hard enough in his house to deserve my egg!"

Zinab also reported that she had had a hard time in her husband's house, because she didn't know how to weave. She had been suffering from toothache for three months, but her husband refused to take her to the dentist. She was not allowed to visit her own blood-relatives in the village. Her husband refused to purchase sugar and tea for the household, though she used to steal wheat sometimes and buy these items from the village shop or ask her father to give her them. She was often asked by her husband to leave his house, his reason being that she did only housework which he regarded as just eating and relaxing. I was able to talk to her husband about his attitude. In reply to the question of why he ill-treated his wife, he said,

"I am a wage labourer and from early morning till late evening I struggle around the village and the city, but my wife sits at home and takes her ease."

When I pointed out that after all she did other jobs, he interrupted me and explained,

"What profit am I going to make out of her washing up and looking after the children. My lady, the buffalo also gives birth and takes care of her children and I sell her calf for a lot of money. I want money. If she learns weaving and I pour its money into my pocket, then I will be her servant and do whatever she likes."

Women who do not weave carpets are passive and say very little about their husbands' ill-treatment of them. They believe that because they do not contribute to the income of family, the husband has the right to be stingy in providing for them. In comparison, a woman who weaves carpets seems to be more daring, active and expressive in her husband's house. She receives her subsistence without any obligation to bow to her husband's every wish and if she notices a shortage in her food supply or clothes or finds out that her husband is intentionally not providing for her adequately, she objects to it: for she weaves carpets and her earnings are of substantial importance to the family budget. It was often pointed out by village women that

"weaving brings qurb-qadr - 'value and esteem'-to a woman. When she makes carpets, her place is warm - yeri istidi, her mouth is full of fodder - agzi yemnidi and her tongue is sharp - dili itidi."

All these metaphors indicate that a weaver is relatively well looked after and maintained by her male relatives, and that if not, she has at least the right to express her objections. Weavers keep a close watch on the economic position of the family. If economic conditions allow, they ask their guardians to buy presents for them. The presents sometimes include clothing - veils for instance, or dresses for the weavers themselves - but more often they are made up of household items - a samovar, bed coverings and kitchen utensils. Women said that the majority of men are unwilling to buy these things for the household, these kinds of items do not matter to them very much. It is the women who notice the lack of them and who have to walk around neighbouring houses to collect the necessary beds, dishes and other things when some visitors arrive or there is a special festivity or gathering. Thus, they often prefer their husbands to buy household rather than personal items as their presents. Hāj Xānīm said that she had woven one extra carpet last year, her husband bought a samovar for her; and this

year she was going to ask him to buy a set of bowls. If husbands do not keep their promises, the wives either refuse to weave or slow down their production. Sometimes women go further and ask for gold bracelets, earrings and other luxuries. Ownership of gold is assumed to be a mark of being loved by one's husband. At weddings, women show each other their gold and boast about the economic status of their husbands and their love for them. Besides this, women who manufacture carpets, watch carefully the way their husbands spend the income. If they take advantage of it, spending it on useless things or for their pleasure, they object to it. Fātemah, who produced eight pieces of carpet a year, though she worked on her own, went away from home for two weeks leaving her little children with her husband, because her husband had spent a large percentage of the income on drugs for himself and had not provided enough food and clothes for her and for the children.

Of course much depends on the individual husband. If a man wants to spend housekeeping money for some other purpose, he does not take any notice of his wife's objections. The money is in his hands and he is powerful enough to make any decision. But unlike women who do not weave and have to endure difficulties silently and passively if they are not provided with maintenance, weavers recognize their rights to complain whether they are effective or not. In short, weavers seem to lead a relatively trouble-free existence. They are taken to the public bath in the town once a month. While in the town they are accompanied to the town bazaar to have a look around and do some shopping for the children and themselves. For a woman who works in drudgery, sitting constantly in one tiring position with no rest, spending a few hours in the town, in hāmām and bazaar, is a great experience. However she is covered strictly with her veil and lowers her voice and looks lifeless in the village coach, while walking in the street, she follows a few steps behind her husband as if she is a stranger to him

in order to consider his dignity in public, or while having her lunch with her husband in the qafa - 'tea house' of the town, she is embarrassed and blushes because she sees and feels herself to be in the men's world. Nevertheless, leaving her limited domain and the village society, staring at the town streets, seeing differently dressed people and big girls going and coming from school (which is unbelievable for the villagers) and doing shopping in the company of male relatives gives her a most enjoyable time. The men promise their womenfolk to take them to the pilgrimage of Imam Reza in Mashad if they make a big effort and produce more than the normal amount of carpet expected annually. If they do not keep their promise, which is often the case, they will have to contend with the objections of their wives which involve refusals to weave or cuts in productivity. Women criticize others who weave regularly, but who do not expect anything from their husbands in return, though their economic position would permit rewards. An informant said,

"Some women weave a lot of carpets out of fear of their husbands without expecting any presents. These women encourage bad habits in their husbands and in ours."

Generally, men inform each other of the number of carpets woven by their wives and the presents their wives have asked for. The men take into account the number of carpets carried by a fellow to the market, or know, for instance, in which house the weft is beaten more. Knowing these affairs is useful to them. They encourage their womenfolk to be more active in weaving and to produce more carpets by referring to a good and fast weaver as an example. Altogether, the advantages and rights allotted to women in family relations as the result of their weaving, persuade the women to give more attention to weaving, even if their families are well off.



### Child bearing

Finally, an important result of the introduction of carpet weaving to the village is the fact that people have gradually started to consider that girls are not so much of a burden or so undesirable as they used to be thought. They have noticed the situation of the man who has only a small holding of land or none, but who lives prosperously as the result of his daughters' weaving. Villagers said that if there was no carpet weaving, what would such fathers have done with such a number of "bread eaters" who would then have had to sit idle and wait for someone to feed them. A man who had nine daughters was given an example:

"You see he is a landless man with nine 'bread eaters'. If the industry did not exist, what would he do? He would have been reduced to beggary. Now he has bought a big flock of sheep. His house is all covered with carpets and he enjoys a prosperous life."

Nevertheless, broadly speaking, girls are still not considered desirable and female infanticide is still quite common, because of all the complex social and cultural reason to which I have referred in the fifth chapter.

Meanwhile, no significant changes have been brought to the fertility position of women. Barrenness and giving birth to daughters only, are still considered their fault and therefore are regarded as worthy of blame. Women have no say over their own fertility. They are expected to give birth to as many children as possible, having limited or no access to contraception. Moreover, despite their trouble and efforts in the socialization of children, women have no right over their children.

### The effect on the women's health

On the one hand, then, the introduction of the carpet industry and the recent economic development of the village seems to have had a positive impact on the position of women - they contribute to the family budget and as a result are able to enjoy sufficient maintenance for themselves and their children, and gain a little say in the family; they marry a few years later; the amount of their kabin and bāšlīx has been increased, and from being a liability daughters have become an asset to their fathers and are considered to be much less burden. However, the economic development and expansion of the carpet industry have also had negative effects on women which, in fact, offset their gains.

If a weaver has gained the right to object to her husband if he should fail or refuse to provide for her, because she also contributes to the income, her relationship with her husband has deteriorated as well. As an organizer and manager who controls marketing and appropriate its income, a man often resorts to physical punishment to keep the weaver submissive. If a weaver fails to complete her daily target or slows down her output, she receives punishment. If the carpet should be woven crookedly, she is also blamed and punished. Hadeqa received several blows from her manager, because her completed piece was crooked. She showed her bruises to the women gathered at the spring and was advised by them to walk out as a sign of opposition and live with her parents for a while.

In addition, the load of women's work at home has been increased. They have to perform extra duties. On the one hand they are 'mothers' and 'housewives' who are responsible for the round of domestic duties to let the family function properly; on the other hand they have to weave regularly to complement the income of the family. Long hours and years of weaving with no break except to do monotonous and never-ending

domestic tasks has affected the women physically and psychologically. Among twenty or thirty there are several who suffer bad eyes, damaged nails, heart and intestinal problems and skin diseases.<sup>1</sup> The weavers often gave long-standing complaints about the never-ending character of weaving. One weaver said,

"Carpet weaving is always with women. It kills us gradually. For it progresses stitch by stitch and is like digging a grave with a needle - iyneynan gor qāzmāxdi. Believe me, I would rather bake 10 bātmān (50kg) of bread a day, than to tie one knot."

Another weaver who had been weaving regularly for 16 years said,

"Look at my nails. They are all damaged. And I have lost one of my eyes and the other one is also going blind. When I sit on the loom, my heart starts throbbing and throbbing for hours. Sometimes I collapse in a faint, but I have no alternative but to continue it: for my husband has no land and is very old. He can't go to work in the towns and I have got three children to provide for."

The effect of carpet weaving on the physical condition of little girls and children has not been any better. Little girls are put on the loom very early, working long hours a day. They work in a small, damp, dark and poorly ventilated room, the door of which is sometimes left open to let through just enough light on the bent weavers. Because of long hours working on the loom with no foot or back rest, the girls are badly deformed and most of them do not grow beyond four feet. Since mothers and little girls are busy with weaving and domestic routines, tiny children are mostly left by themselves, often going without being changed and fed for hours. Or they are left

1. A similar situation was reported in 1923 by Rice from a study of the carpet weavers in workshops and homes throughout Iran. See Rice, op. cit., pp. 62, 133-4 and 224-25.



A seven year old girl looks after her little sister.



to be looked after by little girls who are not themselves much older than they are. Thus many children become involved in accidents, may be falling down into the water well, or into the hot oven or the big milk pot boiling over the oven. Many deformed children are to be seen in the village as the result of burning accidents.

### Schooling

Finally, an important field which has been affected by the carpet industry is the education of female children. No women over the age of 18 had been to school. Out of 103 females in the age group of 6-18, 71 were shown by my census never to have been in school, five to have attended school only for two or three years and 27 to be currently attending elementary school in the village. Their teachers and parents pointed out that the last group who were in school at the time, were "extra" children whose labour was not needed at home yet. They were waiting to replace their sisters. As soon as the latter got married and left their parents' households, their little sisters would replace them, leaving school and putting behind them their interest in school and excellence in studies. During my stay in the village, from 1979-80, of 46 girl students in the elementary school of the village, 19 were taken out of school by their parents by the end of the year.

Generally speaking, education is not considered necessary for girls. In addition to the religious and traditional ideas that if a girl is educated she will lose her normal values and bring shame to her family (a topic discussed previously) people often suggested that education for girls is a waste of money and time, because they will get married and their husbands' families will provide for them. For the majority of women in the village marriage and motherhood is still visualized as the goal, the only means of subsistence and as one's only real destiny. Older women make the effort to bring up girls from early

childhood in such a way as to prepare them well for marriage. Most older women complained that keeping girls at school, even if it is only for a few years prevents them from receiving a complete training and from being fully equipped for marriage and the duties of motherhood. School and education do not teach girls carpet weaving, which is a crucial condition of their being chosen for marriage. Nor does school teach bread preparation and other domestic duties which are necessary to qualify them for marriage. The village women shake their heads in disapproval over the town girls who are educated and who do paid jobs outside home. They say that women who work outside home are careless towards home, husband and children and are unable to fulfil their duties in the proper way.

"If they take good care of their husbands and run a tidy household and bring up well-behaved children, that would be much better than working outside their homes. It is not a woman's duty to be an earner; it is her husband's duty to provide for her."

Thus women see themselves as dependent wives and mothers and fear that education may alienate girls from their conventional roles and make them less submissive to the family. Studies and career motivation are emphasized for boys, because they are the ones who will have an obligation towards a family; they must earn their living and be concerned over public affairs; they must read and write essential letters, perform certain negotiations (over family business) in the town, take the family members to the doctor and so on. Parents, especially mothers are concerned about their sons and worry a great deal about the education of their boys. They enquire frequently about the progress of their sons' education and recommend their teachers to attend more carefully to their studies. While a mother punishes her daughter for not performing household jobs properly, she blames her son if he does not pay adequate attention to study. A father or a mother always hopes their son

will finish his studies and get a white-collar job in the town to save himself from having to be a farmer or a shepherd like his father who always had to be a drudge under the unpleasant living conditions of the village with all its deficiencies in sanitation, public utilities and so on and yet was still unable to earn a sufficient living. Therefore, even though boy children constitute a very important and essential labour force in agriculture and in animal husbandry, just as girl children do in relation to carpet manufacture and household tasks, the older male and female relatives make an effort to reduce the younger men's work responsibilities in order to give them more opportunity to concentrate on study. In terms of the importance given to the education of boys, the rate and progress of literacy among boys has not been comparable to that of girls at all. There are two male teachers from the village who teach in neighbouring villages and out of 137 boys in the same age group as the girls already discussed (6-18), 60 were attending primary school in the village at the date of my census, 47 were studying at the high school in the town, commuting daily and 27 had given up study after five or six years of study at elementary school. Education up to the sixth grade is compulsory for boys from the villagers' point of view and they also aim for secondary education for boys. Only in exceptional cases, such as when the family is poor and cannot afford the expenses of daily travel to and from the town high school or is short of a sufficient labour force to carry out its agricultural work and cannot afford to hire a wage labourer, do the boys give up study. In any case, in addition to the belief and opinion of the rural parents that education is incompatible with their daughters' fulfilment of their future roles, the poverty of families and the productivity of little girls in carpet weaving is the predominant factor that governs their attitudes to girls' education. By the time they reach the age of eight years, a large majority of girls have to begin earning for the family, undertaking domestic chores as well and looking after little siblings. Mothers often indicated that when they send

their daughters to school, they become ali kasih - 'ham fisted' - and cannot manage the work. On the other hand, they said, "if a girl weaves one row of carpet a day, it is worth more to us than education."



### CONCLUSION

This study has examined the impact which the recent economic developments and the involvement of women in a new income-generating type of work have made on their social position. It has been noted that although some changes have occurred in the family and social relationships of women as the result of their ability to add to family income, in general, the improvements have been minor and have merely scratched the surface of the women's needs. The age of marriage and the amounts of women's kabin and bāšlīx have been increased and women have now gained the right to receive their maintenance without obligation, yet many other important features of their lives have remained unchanged. They still lack any basic power or the freedom to make decisions about their lives and family and social relationships. Their marriages are arranged by their guardians, without the slightest consideration of their own suggestions. They are subordinate to men and to older women within the context of the family, exert very little control over their reproductive power and have no rights in regard to their children and are excluded from the public sphere and from village politics. Therefore, it is important to be very clear about the type of work women perform in Doniq. The job women do (carpet weaving) is a private task carried out in individual households by secluded women who do not control the marketing of their goods and therefore have limited rights over the income generated. Thus, even if women in Doniq spend long hours in arduous carpet weaving and their financial contribution is of immense value to the whole social and economic organization, nevertheless because their weaving is done in an isolated and

invisible environment and is not paid directly, it has not made crucial changes in women's lives. The slight changes for the better which have taken place have been more than offset by the exploitation of their new skills which they must bear at home. In other words, because women have become more useful as 'bread-winners' they have been taken advantage of by their families (and within village society as a whole).

On the other hand, the load of their work has been multiplied. Women manufacture carpets at home under the pressure of domestic responsibilities without recognition as anything other than mothers and wives and with no regulation of working hours or entitlement to holidays.

Although women bear the major burdens of the home and contribute as much, or perhaps more, than their male relatives to the family income, their dependency has not been changed. The contribution which their weaving makes to the family income is absorbed into the home budget without the recognition of any fixed amount as the women's share. They have no access to the world of business. Nor do they even own what they produce or their means of production. The end products of their labours are sold and controlled by men, maintaining women's total dependence on them.

In any case, one might speculate that if Doniq women had done the same amount of work with the same productivity outside the home, on the basis of wage-earning and had received the income directly, they might have realized more social benefits.

The literature dealing with the impact of paid work in the public arena on women's status, might help to test this assumption in relation to the position of Doniq women. Cross-cultural analyses of the social position of women have produced the qualified judgement that female participation in social production and their control over economic resources improve their status

and generally give them more autonomy and influence over their own lives; their position is not really comparable to the situation of women who are not involved in productive activities in the public sphere. Nevertheless, work outside home is not sufficient to guarantee real power for women in family and society. Other factors discourage access to and control over the strategic resources of society. Clearly, women have a very insecure position in the labour market. The opportunities of work outside the domestic domain are limited for most women. They often make up a 'labour reserve' which is drawn into production during times of economic vitality or emergency but is disbanded in periods of recession without being offered redundancy payment of any value.

Further, even if possibilities of work might be available, owing to their sex-biased training and their tie with family responsibilities and housework, most women tend to accept inferior and part-time jobs which perpetuates their subordination in the work context and their economic dependence on their male relatives.

One final point which needs to be taken into consideration is that experience from numerous contexts indicates that even though women engage in highly valued productive work and bring as much income in as their men, this has not necessarily enhanced their status. Local and traditional forces are still effective in their influence over their own lives and community affairs. In comparison, women have very limited control over their own sexuality, marriage and over the resources of the family and fertility.<sup>1</sup>

Equally, however, it can be asserted that if women in Doniq

1. P. Caplan and J.N. Bujra (eds.), *Women United, Women Divided*, (London, 1978); M.Z. Rosaldo, "Women, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview", in Rosaldo and Lamphere (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 41; Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-209; Rogers, *op. cit.*, see especially chapter five.

were to take over the marketing of their products and were to assume control of the income, or if they were to engage in another productive form of work outside the confinement of home, their position might improve to some extent and they might gain more influence over their own lives and the lives of others. But the same problems considered above might be obstacles to any major change in their status taking place. A further important speculation which must be considered in relation to Doniq women, is that if women were to wish to engage in work outside the domestic domain or if carpet weaving were to be organized in the public arena, it would be unlikely that their menfolk would allow them to take part, owing to the pardah system and the association of women and their behaviour with the honour of men.

However, this is mere speculation. The reality of the situation is that the traditional values and all the norms, beliefs and practices of 'honour' and 'shame' considered in earlier chapters have made it inevitable that the carpet weaving should be organized in an un-seen and isolated domain. The result is that women have been prevented from marketing the products of their labour or from making use of their own income; and therefore women's occupation in a new wealth-generating work has not brought about major changes in their status.

In the final analysis, it seems that although economic factors are vital, they are not the only considerations, the only conditions determining women's lives. This is made clear from the birth of daughters in Doniq. In Doniq daughters are now much greater economic assets, and yet their births are not welcomed more than previously. Although parents recognize the useful contribution their daughters make as carpet weavers, and this has increased the age of marriage a little, nonetheless, the parents are still very much preoccupied with the question of virginity, 'honour' and 'shame' and this still prompts them to marry their daughters off at early ages. Thus, the modified economic status



brought about by the involvement of Doniq women in carpet making has not affected traditional and ideological values considerably.

Consequently it appears that all the complex social, economic, the traditional concepts of 'honour' and 'shame' and ideological forces are inter-related crucial elements in restricting Doniq women's movement and their power over the domestic and extra-domestic distribution of strategic resources.

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